An Interview with Helen Frankenthaler by Hilton Kramer

1994

Partisan Review 2

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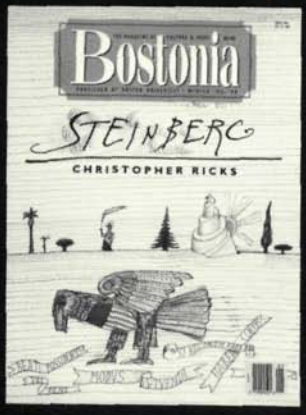

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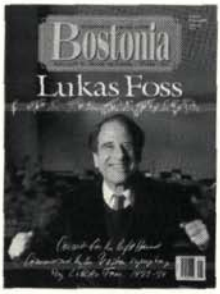

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Remembering Dwight Macdonald

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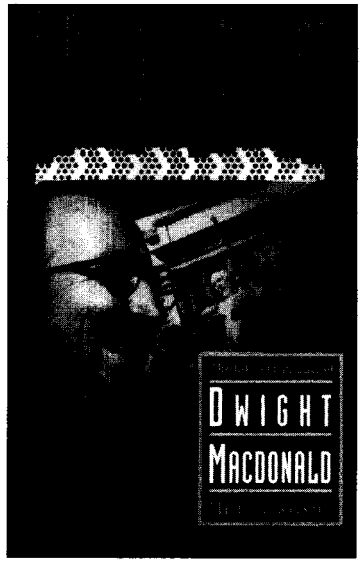

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Editor's Note: With this issue, we are introducing cultural cartoons as a new feature and welcome original submissions.

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COMMENT

Delmore Delmore Schwartz, whose reputation, like the stock market, has gone up and down, was a remarkable literary figure. He was one of the most intelligent and talented writers of his generation. At his best, he was also most witty and charming. Little known is his philosophical training and insight. I recall, for example, his response as a student in Sidney Hook's philosophy class to Hook's exposition of Aristotle's idea of becoming. "Only an acorn," said Hook, "could become an oak tree." To which Delmore replied, "Only a pig can become a ham sandwich." He had that instantaneous awareness in all fields that is characteristic of extraordinary talents. But he became psychologically paralyzed, an insomniac, drug-addicted alcoholic.

Unfortunately, it is mostly the unattractive side of Delmore Schwartz that is highlighted in his correspondence with James Laughlin, the poet and publisher of New Directions, recently issued by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. We all have our unattractive sides, but Delmore's was heavily accented, mainly because he was paranoid and insistent in his publishing dealings and in his practical relations with friends. True, he was handicapped by his inability to function from time to time, and increasingly so as he got older. In addition, opportunities – in teaching and publishing – for serious writers were more limited when Delmore began his career than they are now. In any event, most of Delmore's letters to Laughlin consisted of haggling and accusing Laughlin of mistreating and short-changing him. The better side of Delmore – which as his friend I knew – appears occasionally in his wit and his uncanny literary judgments. But it is overshadowed by his demands and complaints.

It is so sad to see someone of Delmore's abilities – and incapacity to deal with the practical necessities of daily life – so much concerned with the bottom line, with advances, royalties, contracts, promotion, job relations. For in addition to being published by Laughlin, Delmore worked from time to time as literary advisor and manuscript reader for him. He was further involved because Gertrude Buckman, his wife at the time, did some office tasks for New Directions, and there were some disputes about her work.

One aspect of the literary life – rarely commented on – is the difficulty writers in general have in coping with the practical and commercial aspects of their work. The academy has become a haven for most writers; still, their literary activity, in coping with the feverish commercial pressures, is fraught with problems and disappointments. And another aspect of this situation is even less frequently commented on: the psychological effects of fierce market competition on the personalities of many writers,

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particularly those in the more popular genres, such as fiction and journalism. Hence, they are involved in the tensions and vicissitudes of business, though almost constantly at a disadvantage. Furthermore, success is often rewarded with the hazards of celebrity status. The normal concerns of writers are compounded by financial worries that make literary life a special form of anxiety.

The contrast with the former communist countries is striking. Paradoxically, under communism, the difficulties of writing and publishing were expanded to those of life and death. Artists were guaranteed a comfortable living and large circulation for their work, made possible by state control of literature and the absence of a competing popular culture, but they were in constant dread of censorship, imprisonment, and exile. These fears have been removed with the transition to deomcracy. But now the change to a market economy in the former communist countries is altering not only the culture of the country but also the life of the writer. He has been restored to the benefits and hazards of a free society.

Poor Delmore, he became a symbol of the vulnerabilities of the modern writer, both psychologically and financially. Perhaps only such a splendid fictional portrait based on the life of Delmore Schwartz as Saul Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift* could indicate the dimensions of Delmore's capacities and incapacities.

Moral Philanthropy *The New Yorker,* of all places, recently ran a piece on the Jewish English-language *Forward* by David Remnick. He reported that the *Forward,* which, sadly, is in financial trouble, is dedicated to the idea that Jews are like other minorities, an ethnic group with their own problems and prejudices. This is a bold proposition, and one that runs counter to many Jewish illusions and prejudices. Some years ago, Irving Kristol wrote a piece for *Commentary* arguing that Jews, unlike other minorities, ignored their own interests while supporting the interests of other victimized peoples, particularly the blacks. And he received a lot of criticism from many Jews who had an idealistic view of the Jewish role in modern society.

The problem facing those who insist that Jews have their own interests is that the Jewish people have always had a dual nature. They have had the destiny of victims along with a universalist vision. They have been pariahs and spiritual cosmopolitans. It is no accident that the Russians under Stalin branded them as "cosmopolitans." Jews championed the causes of downtrodden individuals and entire peoples. Jewish intellectuals supported the most trans-national, the most visionary ideas and

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principles.

This divided consciousness has been at the root of the large spiritual and intellectual achievement of the Jews, as well as the cause of much of their suffering. Take the case of the national state, Israel. This duality has been responsible for its successes and, to some extent, for its international difficulties. For much of the criticism of Israel, especially by Jewish intellectuals themselves, has come from the idealization of the Jews. Thus it has been argued that Israel, as the land of transcendent Jewry, must be judged by the highest standards, by the standards Jews apply to themselves as well as to others. Hence criteria for political behavior that are not used to criticize most other nations are invoked to attack Israel.

What is the answer, the cure for the split personality of the Jewish people? Surely it is not to give up their universalist morality and codes of thinking. Yet they are victims of a rising global anti-Semitism and the widespread hostility to Israel. Perhaps the historic role of the Jewish people cannot be altered easily. But the situation might be improved if the Jews gave up some of their moral philanthropy and if, at the same time, the presence of anti-Semitism in both the Christian and Arab worlds were lessened.

W. P.

Schindler's List After reading on the black screen that *Schindler's List* is produced by "Amblin Entertainment Industries," we behold a dark, empty room and the slow lighting of Sabbath candles standing on a bare table covered with a white tablecloth. We know immediately that the film we have come to see is about the fate of the Jews, and we can guess that the slowly changing glow of the candlelight, to orange and yellow, also symbolizes a glimmer of hope. Many glowing reviews, of course, already had alerted the expectant audience that Steven Spielberg's subject is more serious than *E.T.* and *Jurassic Park,* and that it is about the German businessman, Oskar Schindler, who defied the Nazi machinery set up to destroy the Jews.

In this film, Spielberg certainly displays his exceptional talents as a producer: his timing is flawless, his sense of decorum almost perfect, worthy of a number of Academy Awards. He has managed to turn ordinary people into actors and has evoked in them the most intimate emotions while avoiding all triteness or overacting. A number of friends had advised me to bring at least two handkerchiefs. Others had said they were glad to have proof that even during Hitler's reign some Germans took the risk to save Jewish lives. And some camp survivors as well joined the

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positive thinkers who assume that this movie will keep alive the memories of the Holocaust and thereby will help avoid future atrocities. All of their comments were appropriate – though the preventive effects of this movie are rather doubtful.

Why then was I bothered by it? Was it the perfection of the medium that permeated a production featuring the gradual conversion of the money-grubbing, callous, womanizing Schindler into the sensitive savior of eleven hundred condemned Jews? Was it the Sunday afternoon atmosphere of popcorn-munching people who, upon leaving the theater, were handed a flyer headed by Spielberg's trendy pronouncement that he "had to make this film to remind people to stop the brutal killings in Bosnia?" Or was I upset by overhearing the senior citizen behind me, with a decidedly Viennese accent, say to her friend, "I told my daugher on the phone that I was going to see *Schindler's List*. She said she hadn't heard of it, and that I should stop thinking of the past"?

Ultimately, I believe, I despaired once again at having people understand that the industrialized murder which took place in Auschwitz and the other death camps is unique, that no amount of "exposure" could possibly educate masses of otherwise well-meaning individuals to stand up to clever demagogues intent on inciting them to hate their neighbors – of whatever race, color, or conviction they might be. Yes, Spielberg tried to get beyond the customary, well-meaning admonitions, and beyond the so-called scientific studies that depersonalize the victims. But even though his effort is paved with good intentions, and he may even instruct a few people to become more tolerant, he has ended up trivializing the Holocaust. In fact, Spielberg's extraordinary commercial sense effectively turned Nazi ideology and monstrous, industrialized murder into a spectacle. Thereby, "never again," already one of the slogans of our Zeitgeist, yet another sales gimmick, has become the most recent vehicle to further Spielberg's outstanding reputation and populist appeal.

Few movie critics have even mentioned that Spielberg's ordinary actors are well-formed and well-fed; that they all wore snow boots, even as they visibly shivered under their coats and scarves while trotting to their death; that even the best-looking children – when undernourished, cold, and scared – develop scars and scabies and look scrawny and listless. None of the actors resembled the skeletons who were liberated by the American soldiers in 1945, who could not move, much less run to get onto trains. Nor would the real bodies of the naked women have been as appealing to the audience as those of the film's cast when, before being saved, they began to take the notorious showers of lethal gas in Auschwitz. But what a suspenseful scene, how magnificently conceptualized by Spielberg! Had he included a few newsreels of the actual events, fewer people would

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have come to see his *chef d'oeuvre*.

Spielberg is a genius at turning atrocity into film, and "Holocaust horror" is the currently fashionable atrocity. Schindler's Nazi pal, the infamous and gun-happy Göth, shoots Jews for the fun of it. Given how inured we have become to seeing individuals get it in the neck with ever faster guns by the bad guys on our television screens, Göth appears just a bit more outrageous because he does not even pretend to have been provoked. In the larger scheme of things, Göth's performance goes just a notch or two beyond what the audience has become accustomed to, which itself is a necessary step to keep it on tenterhooks. I am not saying that Spielberg's public is consciously waiting to be titillated by the violence, or that it is not petrified by the memory of the events *Schindler's List* evokes, but only that if ever we manage to avoid another Holocaust it will not be by way of a film. However moving it may be, however well-acted, *Schindler's List* remains mass entertainment – in a society where such entertainment has taken the place of serious thinking and has become the opium not only of the masses but of many intellectuals as well.

It has been argued, quite plausibly, that the Holocaust is beyond the capacities of art. Only a few novelists, such as Aharon Appelfeld and Norman Manea, have approached the subject, and they have treated it tangentially and allusively, so to speak. One is tempted to conclude that if fiction, which is more complex, metaphoric and symbolic, cannot easily encompass the Holocaust, then surely the cinema, with its bent toward the spectacular and the immediate, is not the best medium. A comparison with the book *Schindler's List*, by Thomas Keneally, illustrates this point.

E. K.

We are saddened by the death of

Ralph Waldo Ellison

a friend and early contributor.

1914-1994

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EDITH KURZWEIL

An Interview with Otto Kernberg

EK: Dr. Kernberg, you have a very broad-ranging background. You were born in Vienna, lived and became a psychoanalyst in Chile, and now are one of the most respected members among American Freudians. These diverse experiences also have made it necessary for you to familiarize yourself with many strands within psychoanalytic therapy and practice, including some that are not popular in the United States. Currently you are Vice President of the International Psychoanalytic Association, the organization founded by Freud and his disciples. Psychoanalysis is not held in high esteem today, at least relatively, by either the public or by many intellectuals. But several decades ago, it had wide support among them. How do you explain this change?

OK: I don't know that I have all the answers, and I really don't know whether any study of this has been done that would give solid answers instead of shared suppositions. So within that relative qualification, I would say that psychoanalysis was received in this country with great openness and enthusiasm because there is in general a great openness and enthusiasm for new ideas here, and eagerness for them, which I think is one very positive aspect of American culture. Of course the counterpart to this is that people get tired easily of new ideas and want still newer ones. So one aspect of the reception of psychoanalysis was an easy acceptance of the new: it fit with the cultural movements after the First World War, the ascent of Surrealism, the general strengthening of existential philosophy all over the Western world, the focus on subjectivity. And within psychiatry, it helped strengthen the move toward a sociocultural approach to mental illness. As the focus on psychological factors as contributors to human conflicts and neurosis developed, there was growing interest in psychoanalysis as a promising new science that looked at psychological illness from a psychological, in contrast to an organicist, way.

At that time, while indeed a great deal of progress was being made in the psychological understanding and psychological treatment of mental illness – for healthier patients as well as for sicker ones, in terms of the de-

Editor's Note: This interview took place in New York City on February 27, 1994.

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velopment of new concepts of hospital psychiatry – in the process psychoanalysis tended to become idealized, overplayed, exaggerated, with sometimes unrealistic expectations. This was in part a result of a kind of enthusiastic overreach on the part of psychoanalysts themselves. For example, psychosomatic medicine, as conceived by Franz Alexander, promised more than it could achieve, and created significant, justified disappointment in those medical circles that initially were very open to it. Psychoanalytic institutes were set up, following the European model, mostly independent from medical schools and from departments of psychology and from the university, and that gradually created a kind of ivory-tower psychoanalytic culture. While in the 1940s psychoanalysts took departments of psychiatry throughout the country by storm, it became clear after some years that there was a significant split between the application of psychoanalytic concepts within departments of psychiatry on the one hand, and within psychoanalytic institutes and psychoanalytic training on the other. There were many disappointed psychoanalysts in university settings who realized the limits of their training and the lack of the gratification of their own expectations, and who then became very critical of psychoanalysis. I also think that there are certain rigidities in psychoanalytic education which created both an inside group of very enthusiastic followers and an outside group of disappointed enemies.

In addition, I think that the limits of psychoanalysis, as well as the applications of psychoanalysis, ran into trouble. Because psychoanalysis was initially oversold, its limits as a therapeutic technique only gradually became apparent. It took a generation of treatment for this to become evident. At the same time, psychoanalytic institutes and societies were slow in realizing that what had been considered a kind of second-rate treatment, namely psychoanalytic psychotherapy, was really a very important application that deserved scientific development. However, the psychoanalytic institutes and societies were not fully committed to such research and development. It was the research done within universities that developed psychodynamic psychotherapy and psychoanalytic psychotherapy, but they were perceived as inferior treatment methods. It was feared that away from the pure unadulterated psychoanalysis of the institutes, psychoanalysis would be diluted, that there would be fragementary applications of psychoanalysis within university settings. For all these reasons, this distancing began to evolve.

There was also the issue of lay analysis and whether psychoanalysis should be an exclusively medical profession: a fight between American psychoanalysis which was exclusively medical and European psychoanalysis which was not. In 1938 the American Psychoanalytic Association demanded exclusive rights for training in the United States, and the right to set its own standards, threatening that if its demands were not met, the

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American Psychoanalytic Association (APA) would walk out of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA). The IPA then went along with the demands.. It was really a case of blackmail. It was not until fifty years later that the issue exploded, with the lawsuit that a group of psychologists brought against the IPA in 1985, contesting that its rules of exclusivity were discriminating.

But in 1938, the result was that psychoanalysis was cast as a purely medical profession, while research in the field was carried out, significantly, by psychologists, who became for the most part totally dissociated from psychoanalysis. As psychology moved toward a cognitive-behavioral mode that went into different directions, it again created, in terms of scientific developments, antagonism between traditional psychoanalytic institutes and new research that was mostly behavioral and sometimes followed a kind of superficial empiricism. This came about precisely because of the absolute split between the "understanding psychology," ("verstehende Psychologie") that came from Europe and the "experimental psychology" that was strongly based on the tradition of the United States.

EK: It seems you are saying that psychoanalysis has many enemies and that some of them the psychoanalysts created for themselves.

OK: Yes. In addition, psychoanalytic culture became somewhat conventional and adaptive, in the sense of fitting itself into a cultural model of conformity that was then challenged during the years of the counterculture. Many intellectuals, who in another generation would have welcomed the revolutionary exploration of society generated by psychoanalysis, perceived psychoanalysis to the contrary, as an Establishment psychology, in contrast to those new, subjectivist, revolutionary, anarchist aspirations that were part of the counterculture.

EK: Wouldn't you say that this resulted also from the fact that this particular counterculture did not know any history and still is not even aware of the fact that psychoanalysis was a rather revolutionary endeavor when it was started in Vienna at the turn of the century?

OK: Yes, I agree with that. And then finally a very important development occurred, the growth and strength of biological psychiatry within universities. Discoveries in the field of biological psychiatry again brought psychiatry closer to medicine and made the non-psychiatric medical establishment look to these psychiatrists as leaders in the field. So department chairmen with psychoanalytical perspectives were mostly replaced by biological psychiatrists. Psychoanalysis lost its foothold in the medical

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schools without having gained one in psychology, and without having really taken care of its relationship to the university in a broad sense. I think the combination of these factors has brought about a certain alienation of American culture from psychoanalysis. The latest problem arises from the financial restrictions that apply to all psychological treatments and which affect psychoanalysis, as well as psychotherapy and psychiatry. Such policies expose the fact that mental illness and mental health are not a high priority for our culture, in the broad sense.

Finally, I think psychoanalysis's lack of concern with cultural perceptions of itself, the inner-directedness of psychoanalysis for many years in this culture, postponed the point where psychoanalysts started to become concerned about the negative perceptions of psychoanalysis that had developed, both within the university and in the general culture. I would say that only during the last few years has there been a powerful reaction against this, both with the changing image projected by the American Psychoanalytic Association as well as in part through internal changes that already were in the works: the APA's full acceptance, rather than reluctant tolerance, of psychologists and its growing awareness of the need to reestablish positive relationships with the university and with the culture.

In all fairness, there was a relative minority of academically oriented psychoanalysts all along who were concerned about this lack of relationship with the culture and the university. Now, in recent years, this minority has become more influential in the way psychoanalysis is organized in this country. Of course, the new psychoanalytic societies, constituted by psychologists who are directly related to the International Psychoanalytic Association, are also contributing to broadening the impact of psychoanalysis. In particular, I think, they are opening new roads to the university and linking psychoanalytic research to other research methodologies.

EK: Are you saying, in a way, that psychoanalysts were more inner-directed just at a time when the culture was more outer-directed?

OK: Yes. They were more inner-directed institutionally, while the culture was outer-directed psychologically.

EK: You call psychoanalysis a science, but a lot of people argue that it is not. Now, I don't think we want to get into the technicalities of this issue, but what in general is your position?

OK: It's a good point, and of course it could lead to a very lengthy discussion. Let's put it this way. Ideally, psychoanalysis likes to think of itself as an art and a science: as a science in terms of being part of the humanis-

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tic sciences, psychology, sociology, anthropology, rather than the physical sciences, and an art in terms of a highly individualized utilization of some basic tools – psychoanalytic theory and technique – that are applied creatively by an individual therapist in treating patients. So it's not simply a technique; there's a creative element to it. That is the artistic element. Now, I think that whether it is a science or not can be argued at a highly theoretical level – it depends on what the definition of science is. But from a practical viewpoint there is undoubtedly both empirical research and conceptual research that makes aspects of the psychoanalytic endeavor part of the sciences, and to deny that, I think, is really not quite honest. Undoubtedly, there are aspects of psychoanalytic speculation that are unconfirmed findings, theories, that represent, if you want, the potential beginning of scientific exploration that has not yet been carried out. There are areas within psychoanalytic thinking and practice that cannot be clearly defined as science, by whatever standard, and others that clearly can be and are. Whether each individual psychoanalytic treatment is scientific exploration or not, I think, depends on the definitions. It's a fuzzy area. But there is psychoanalytic research, and significant research, that has been going on, and that surprisingly is very often ignored by critics of psychoanalysis.

EK: The most recent criticism of psychoanalysis has come from Frederick Crews, with his essay in *The New York Review of Books*. I assume you're familiar with his position and with some of your colleagues' responses to him.

OK: Well, Crews was primarily attacking Freud and his life and his way of treating patients, and that's yesterday's news or yesterday's wars. I don't know how to put it. There has been quite a response to his article. In any event, Freud's contributions were very fundamental in opening up new understanding about the theory of the mind. Undoubtedly there were flaws both in his technical approach to patients and in many of his assumptions. He changed his theories throughout his life. And surely he had shortcomings in his personal life. However, psychoanalysis neither stands nor falls with the quirks of Freud's personal relations to his patients or colleagues, but rather with those aspects of his findings which have been reconfirmed or disproved in the experience of generations of psychoanalysts. Crews himself was totally ignoring what has been going on in psychoanalysis during the last thirty years.

EK: Do you think Crews was responding to the Zeitgeist, the cultural trends against psychoanalysis?

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OK: I don't know what his personal motivation is. He obviously feels very strongly about this and writes very strikingly. Quite frankly, I don't find his critique very relevant to what is going on right now in scientific research in psychoanalysis regarding the effectiveness of the treatment, for example, regarding the analysis of primitive mechanisms of functioning, early development, et cetera. All this was ignored by him, and it's there, where the relevance of psychoanalysis is being questioned as well as enacted.

By the way, the same is true for another critique, which is more serious, Adolph Grunbaum. He too is trying to explore Freud's thinking, while disregarding the developments in psychoanalytic theory, practice, technique and research of the last thirty years. For example, he ignores inquiries into the extent to which one can or cannot confirm repressed content in a clinical situation, in which the analyst may well induce in the patient that which the analyst's theories assume to be repressed. How do we go about discovering what is repressed, apart from the influence that the analyst is exerting over the patient? Well, the response to this is: in the nature of scientific evidence, today's psychoanalytic theory perceives what is essential about the unconscious past to be unconsciously reproduced in the here-and-now of the transference. The analysis of the "irrational" in the developing relationship between patient and analyst is being played out from the past, enacted rather than acknowledged and understood.

The role of the analyst is to transform that enactment into understanding. But the enactment predates the analyst's induction of any particular unconscious contents, and the extent to which such transference developments can be observed and studied objectively in the context of the emerging psychoanalytic process – by ways that are independent from any effort of the psychoanalyst to influence the patient in any way – do give us a scientific basis of inquiry. There is significant research being done on this issue, none of which is mentioned in Grunbaum's book and very little in the discussions about it.

EK: It seems that much of what you're saying has to do with the fact that people generally know what you might call Freud's philosophy or his sociology, his general thinking, but are not familiar with what in fact transpires in the psychoanalytic session.

OK: Yes; neither is there real familiarity with developments both in psychoanalytic theory and psychoanalytic technique, and with new developments in the application of both. For example, psychoanalytic psychotherapy was developed in this country; the object-relations theories developed in Great Britain and Latin America; research on the psychoana-

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lytic relationship was carried out here and in Germany. Infant development and affect theory were explored from a psychoanalytic view, and psychoanalysis was applied to sociological research and anthropology, in France and Latin America. The development of new psychopharmacological treatments permits the effective treatment of many symptoms of neurosis, but they are not as useful with regard to the structural psychological aspects of severe character pathology and personality disorders. However, the combination of drug treatment and psychoanalytic psychotherapy may reinforce, in selected cases, the effectiveness of the total treatment approach.

EK: There is also the promise of what I might call the cheaper therapies, cheaper emotionally, cheaper financially.

OK: There are financial pressures directed against any long-term intensive psychotherapies. Again, I think there is a well-warranted concern of society, which has limited resources for psychological treatment, that those resources be optimally employed, and this requires research on the effects of psychotherapeutic treatments. The problem is that the study of the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic treatments has presesnted significant methodological problems, and it has taken twenty or thirty years to gradually overcome them. It has been a very slow process, but we have made significant progress. And in the current discussions, this progress is being ignored.

EK: That brings me to the next question, about the current preoccupations, or revelations, about child abuse, which leads to the question of why Freud changed his mind about the roots of child abuse – when did it take place, when was it real, when was it imaginary, et cetera. You know, Jeffrey Masson's thesis.

OK: Freud changed his mind because he discovered that fantasies about sexual experience, unconscious fantasies about sexual experience in childhood, exceeded by far actual traumatic experiences of incest and sexual abuse. Given the fact that Freud treated a relatively healthy population in the sense that most of his patients did not come from the brutalized inhabitants of inner-city ghettos, it is reasonable to assume that incest and gross sexual abuse was limited among his patient population.

Freud concluded that there were important unconscious fantasies that were universal and that dealt with infantile sexuality. This was an absolutely revolutionary discovery for which we now have empirical evidence from infant observation and from childhood observation. And it was, in my view, a refutation of conventional assumptions about childhood. We

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still are terribly upset, culturally speaking, about childhood sexuality. Actually, all researchers who have tried to study basic components of developing infantile and childhood sexuality have found enormous difficulties in carrying out such empirical work. We are still suffering from what you could call a conventional conspiracy against the acknowledgment of childhood sexuality. So Freud, in my view, did not deny the existence of real incidents of child abuse, but he thought beyond it to a childhood sexuality that was fundamental in the life not only of very sick patients but of normal individuals as well.

Having said that, I would add that we have found out that severe physical abuse and sexual abuse is an important, relatively nonspecific etiological factor in a broad spectrum of psychological disorders, and that it affects women much more than men in our culture because little girls tend to suffer more often and are more frequently victims of severe sexual and physical abuse, although by no means exclusively. Having said that, in turn, I would add that I think that there is now a tendency, as part of the cultural expression of radical feminism, to exaggerate the importance of this etiological factor. There is also a very strong puritanical current in American culture which has always been here, and which only superficially seemed to have been disrupted by the counterculture. I don't know who said "scratch a hippie and find a hysteric," but it seems to me that this points to some more consistent aspects of American culture as compared, for example, to conventional culture in Latin countries, where there is somewhat less of a puritanical atmosphere, I believe.

EK: Today there are many therapists who try to find out whether a child has been abused, or whether an adult was abused as a child, by suggesting to the patient what might have happened. Many times, the patient affirms the therapist's suggested reconstructions as having really happened. How can we determine whether the patient has had a real recollection or is responding to suggestion?

OK: Well, there is a new syndrome that has been described, the false memory syndrome, which indeed is an important finding. My own field is that of severe personality disorder, so I see many patients, both those who have been abused, physically and sexually abused, and those who suffer from the conditions that have been described as false memory syndrome, where ideologically inspired therapists have inculcated in their patient the sense that they must have been abused. I think that is the cultural fashion at this moment. And the forms that severe personality disturbances take are very much shaped by culturally fostered expressions of pathology. For example, if in the culture there is a kind of inhibition of the transformation of emotional conflicts into fantasy, into verbal statements, into

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narratives, then psychological conflicts may, in turn, be more often expressed as physical symptoms. We find in many relatively – and I quote – "verbally unsophisticated" societies that there is a high prevalence of multiple conversion symptoms and somatization, while similar kinds of conflicts in culturally more advantaged societies take the form of psychological symptoms such as depression and anxiety. For example, there are undoubtedly cultural factors that channel severe conflicts in the infant-mother relationship into eating disorders. So culture tends to shape conflicts in ways which depend mostly on the way conflicts are dealt with in the family.

There is now an assumption that unconscious conflict is due to severe trauma, but I think that really is culturally determined. This has been pointed out, but not by those people who are functioning within a constructed cultural environment of victimization, in which there is a general effort to be a victim of something. So the victims gather, help each other in groups of victims, and there is a normalization through the recovery from victim status.

Of course, you have to look for culprits when you are victims, so there is also a constant search for culprits. This process oversimplifies what really goes on and ignores the fact that, from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, whenever there is actually severe traumatization, an unconscious identification with both victim and victimizer occurs, and that in the psychology of those who have been traumatized we find these two identifications that need to be worked with.

EK: In other words, you're saying that psychoanalysis is capable with the help of its own methods of distinguishing real abuse and trauma from those imagined and generated by false memory syndrome. Yet there are so many therapists now, all kinds of therapists, who are not psychoanalytically trained.

OK: Well, one of the problems that developed out of that long-standing divorce between psychological institutes and the university has been the lack of social integration, legalization, of the profession of psychotherapy. Into that void have streamed masses of therapists with problematic and inferior training. The public has not been oriented very clearly on how to find reliable specialists, because of the lack of social regulation, control, legitimization of authentic and valuable training versus its absence. Psychoanalysts have contributed to this problem by the refusal of psychoanalytic institutions to be lumped together with other psychotherapeutic institutions toward a kind of social regulation, accreditation and legitimization of psychotherapists. This has contributed to the chaos and to the difficulties perceived by the general public: how to find a good psy-

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chotherapist, a good psychoanalyst, how to know when you need psychotherapy or psychoanalysis, when you do not.

EK: There, I think you have almost utopian notions. But I want to get back to your other point, about victims. It seems to me that new communities of victims keep coming up. And they prefer their own type of therapists, or at least they are being told that they must be healed by a specific type.

OK: Yes, but insofar as these are very often transient fashions, they tend to shift rapidly enough, so that the most sophisticated members of such communities eventually move out from that group culture. It's because of this problem that I have insinuated and often made the point that it is really important that psychoanalysis strengthens its bridges with the university and with the general culture, to offer more widespread knowledge to the general community, and thereby to properly train more therapists. However, I think that in an open society such as ours it is unavoidable and only natural that there are subcultures and cults, and I think we have to live with that: it's the price we are paying for a degree of freedom and openness that may be much higher than in other countries.

On the other hand, I think that if there were clearer integration of the empirical study of personality and personality disorders with the development of psychoanalytic knowledge and expertise, an effort to keep together the biological and the psychological aspects of the personality in the differing departments of psychology and psychiatry, there could be a much more integrated network of therapists. After all, if you want to get an operation, you go to the nearest university and find out who the top surgeons are. You want to find out which hospital is the best and who operates there. Well, if the most respected and serious psychological institutions have a network of information, then they can orient people to psychotherapies rather than leaving their fate to self-perpetuating victims' groups.

EK: You were one of the earliest among American Freudians to seriously and directly address Melanie Klein's theories of object relations. Why do you think most of your colleagues were reluctant to do so until the last couple of years?

OK: This was due to historical circumstances. In the 1940s, after Europe was overrun by the Nazis, the center of psychoanalytic development remained in London. Within the British psychoanalytic society, there were bitter fights between Anna Freud's group and Melanie Klein's group, with a middle group that then was relatively small. Those fights were ex-

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treme, and both of those groups "colonized" different parts of the world. The Kleinians developed their influence mostly in South American countries; the ego psychologists developed their views mostly in the United States. So psychoanalysis in the United States came totally under the influence of Anna Freud's group, and the psychology of animosity toward Melanie Klein's thinking, therefore, was transplanted to this country and became almost automatic. It took a new generation of psychoanalysts to work through those differences, which I think is occurring now, with significant enrichment. The Kleinian institutes in South America have to work through the need to incorporate new thinking in a like way, and of course the same thing has been going on to some extent also in Europe. Perhaps in the United States and in some psychoanalytic societies in Latin America we have the sharpest expression of these conflicts.

An interesting phenomenon that came about in this country was the development of self-psychology by Heinz Kohut. It is interesting in the sense that the so-called cultural psychoanalysts, led by Karen Horney, which split off from ego psychology in the early forties in this country and led to the development of the Academy of Psychoanalysis, have created a precedent whereby all "revisionists" would split off. But Kohut and his followers managed to stay within the American Psychoanalytic Association. They created for the first time within the American psychoanalytic tradition a diversity of views that opened the road to overcoming the exclusiveness of a certain view of ego psychology which existed before, and also contributed to and then incorporated British object relations theories. Child psychoanalysis, I think, also contributed to that opening by the interest in some leaders of the middle group, particularly Winnicott, who in a way had already carried out some kind of synthesis between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, and whose ideas were much less questionable. So there were many sources for the openings. And there has been a concerted effort on the part of the International Psychoanalytic Association to support the cross-fertilization of ideas in the last ten or twenty years.

EK: I have wondered whether Kohut himself was in some way indirectly influenced by his Chicago environment, by the fact that George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley were there and had many followers.

OK: I can't answer that: it's a possibility. You could also raise the question of the extent to which he might have been influenced by Franz Alexander, although Kohut himself strongly denied that. I think there are certain local influences that are important, and that psychoanalytic institutes and societies take on more of their respective environments than their members often realize.

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EK: How do you respond to Jacques Lacan and his followers, who frequently denounced Freud and his "use" of the unconscious in the practice of psychoanalysis?

OK: Lacan, I think, is very attractive because he develops a psychoanalytic view that focuses sharply on language as determining the structure of the unconscious, and employs linguistic analysis as what might be called a kind of royal road to the unconscious. And this created a bridge between psychoanalytic theorizing and literary criticism, through its focus on language and by Lacan's leaning towards structuralist philosophy – which entered the university in this country in the 1970s, along with French philosophers influenced by Lacan who, in turn, applied his thinking to deconstructionist approaches, which themselves followed structuralism. So two intellectual currents coming from France carried the psychoanalytic message with them. At the same time, Lacan also had links originally with Surrealism, with the subjectivism in art that was appealing to a certain segment of American culture, and later on also had political associations with the left-wing criticism of capitalist society. Lacan's sharp criticism of the United States resonates, for example, with the taking up of certain aspects of Lacan's thinking by Althusser, by French communism, and in the analysis of unconscious identification with capitalism as a sadistic father.

I think Lacan became interested in literary criticism because he connected the psychoanalytic concern with unconscious meanings, first with structuralist philosophy, with deconstruction, later with counterculture protest against capitalist culture, indirectly. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari started to be read by people who had never seen a book on psychoanalytic technique, and there is an application of "Freudian" technique to, say, film criticism, that discusses psychoanalysis in a philosophical mode linked indirectly to Freud's early writing, but bypassing completely psychoanalysis as a clinical profession, or a clinical science, or whatever you want to call it. So there was the appeal of Lacan. And the early Lacan had indeed some interesting concepts that are relevant to psychoanalysis, that were absorbed into other currents of French psychoanalytic thinking, particularly. But the great weakness of the Lacanian approach, the absence, at least in my view, of an integrated and well-documented and consistent theory of technique, was of course not appreciated by literary criticism because it was less relevant to that field. They were not dealing with patients either. It was a philosophical utilization of psychoanalytic theory.

I must add that there are of course many different ways in which psychoanalysis has been influencing philosophy. For example, if you look at

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Marsha Cavell's recent book, *The Psychoanalytic Mind: From Freud to Philosophy,* you find a very sophisticated modern integration of psychoanalytic object relations theory, with Donald Davidson's approach to philosophy and truth-statements, and an approach to the dilemma of identity, which is a philosophical problem and at the same time an actual clinical problem in psychoanalysis. So there are many ways of going from psychoanalytic theory to philosophy, but the one through Lacan was really not connected with most of the clinical developments in the field. I think that's a fair statement.

EK: Along with the recent general criticisms of psychoanalysis, the question of Freud's Jewishness also has been persistently taken up. I keep wondering why it is of such interest. What do you think makes that such a burning question?

OK: I am really not an expert on this matter. It's hard for me to discuss this in very general terms. Freud represented a very assimilated Central European Judaism that was estranged from identification with Judaism as a religion, but at the same time maintained Judaism as a cultural tradition with which he identified and felt comfortable, although he was not active in Jewish organizations. I am really not an expert in discussing the question of the extent to which Freud's identification with Jewish culture is influential in his approach to psychology and to what extent it might have influenced the nature and the origin of psychoanalysis. I know that this has been a source of great interest.

EK: What else would you like to discuss that we might not have touched on yet?

OK: I always ask this of my patients at the end of an interview: "Is there anything else I should have asked you, or which you expected me to ask? Or anything that you would like to tell me and didn't have a chance to say?" Well, I think of some basic convictions I have about where psychoanalysis stands nowadays. First of all, I think that it is still the most powerful, richest theory of personality that we have, and that it has enormous implications for the treatment of patients with a broad spectrum of psychological illnesses, with a particular focus of course on personality disorders, maybe because it's my field of interest; that it has the tools for the analysis of the origin of individual personalities, their distortions and the possibility of change by psychological means.

To assume that brief, "cheap" psychotherapies can replace psychoanalysis when fundamental changes in personality functions are necessary

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is an illusion. And if society is not willing or able to pay for that, psychoanalysis will continue as a knowledge base that will have to wait for better times, in the same way that highly specialized techniques in surgery and organ transplants are being tightly rationed, because society cannot afford to distribute them to everybody who could benefit from them.

EK: Yes, but we don't say that. We keep that a secret.

OK: We keep it a secret, and we use it as an argument against psychoanalysis. But it's important to note that, of course, not everybody needs to be psychoanalyzed or would benefit from it. For those who do, it makes the difference between a useful life or a lost life. The problem of how psychoanalytic treatment should be rationed is one that the field shares with all new, complex, person-intensive techniques in medicine. I also believe that psychoanalysis is of enormous value in derived psychotherapeutic techniques for individuals, and groups, and couples, and families, and that it is a valuable instrument for analysis in the cultural realm, not because psychoanalysis has all the answers but because it is one instrument, one among others, for literary analysis, for historical analysis, for sociological analysis, for issues that are extremely important: mass psychology, the influence of mass culture, group functioning, political life. They are crucial issues in which psychoanalysis is one of the instruments that we have. I believe that psychoanalysis has to continue developing its identity as a combination of science and art, in contrast to certain regressive institutional tendencies that exist in psychoanalysis which seek to make it more of a combination of technical school and theological seminary. So there are institutional tasks ahead of us.

I think that psychoanalytic education needs to progress significantly; it has been relatively static. I think that research, psychoanalytic research, needs to be strengthened in two almost diametrically opposite directions. One, in terms of linkage with empirical research that is carried out in universities; important knowledge about psychoanalysis may be discovered with methods that do not stem from psychoanalysis proper. If I had time I would talk in more detail about this: here I am just enunciating it.

On the other hand, I think that research in the European sense of conceptual development of models of understanding are also important, because what we discover in the clinical situation and in our conceptual formulations sometimes is many years ahead of methodology that permits empirical research. So there is simultaneous progress along different tracks, and there is no single exclusive one, and therefore we need to keep a broad concept of research in psychoanalysis. And I think that psychoanalysis provides a potential for enormously enriching the boundaries of the mind in all those research institutions that are dealing with that

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boundary between mind and body; this is really the concern of psychiatry, of psychology, and to some extent of other professions as well.

Insofar as psychoanalysis will develop its research and will be respected in the university, it will filter down into the life of the culture. Insofar as psychoanalysis communicates meaningfully what it can contribute to cultural understanding, it will filter down into cultural life. These two sources will provide a network of knowledge to a sophisticated part of the public. When psychoanalysis is perceived to make a convincing contribution to knowledge and to culture, it will be accorded more respect.

I agree with you that more education should be carried out, and that one task of psychoanalytic institutes and societies is to establish a friendly environment in their social networks where they are located, and that psychoanalytic societies should have a concrete cultural mission in their communities. I think psychoanalytic institutes and societies that traditionally were very aloof and self-oriented are moving in that direction. They are opening their doors and have created organizations of friends of psychoanalysis, which conduct open scientific and cultural programs. Of course my own societies, the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research and the Association for Psychoanalytic Medicine, have been very active in such endeavors, but this is now happening more and more throughout the country.

In other countries, psychoanalysis has been very popular, almost too much so. In France, in Germany, in Argentina, in Brazil, just to name a few, there is the kind of turbulence around psychoanalysis that existed in this country twenty or thirty years ago. It has to do with many factors, but I don't see it as a "once and for all" phenomenon in that it happens either earlier or later. Rather, I envision it as the expression of the extent to which psychoanalysis is interested in and able to enter the cultural debate, since it has an important contribution to make to the development of psychological science. I do feel optimistic as I look at the total world situation.

Yet I believe that the short-term concerns about financial constraints, and the decrease of means for psychological treatment that affect health care, are quite real in all advanced societies. This has to do with the basic common feature – particularly in Western Europe and the United States, – that people, instead of dying young and healthy, now die old and sick, and that our new knowledge cannot be simplified, rationalized, mechanized, but is always acquired by very intensive human investment and is therefore expensive. Health care is becoming more expensive because we have more instruments. We know more. People are getting older and sicker, and we are trying to keep them alive. The question, "What is a reasonable proportion of the gross domestic product that should be in-

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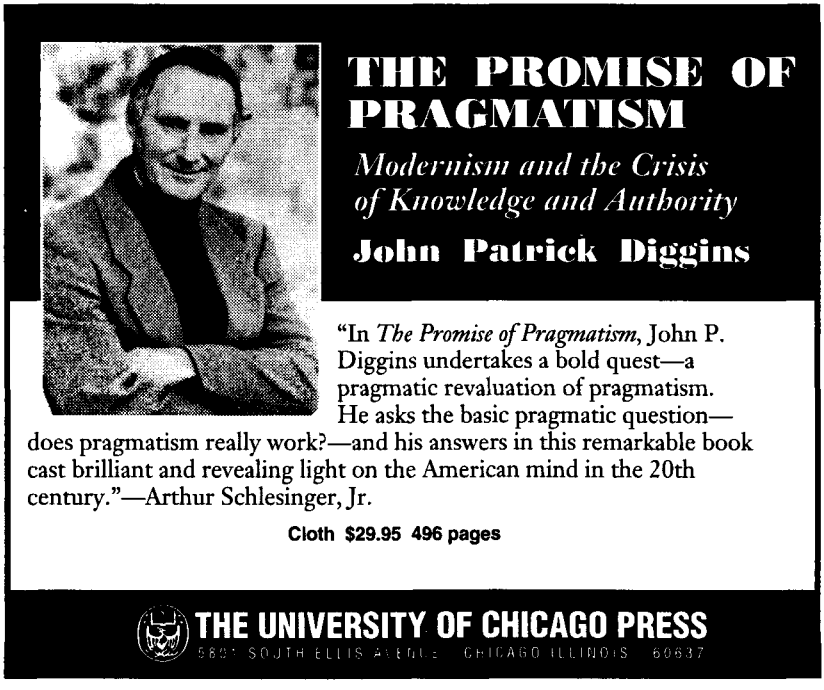
vested in health care?" is an open one. There is a tremendous indignation in the country because it has gone up to thirteen, fourteen percent, and it's higher than anywhere else in the world. But we also probably have the highest number of cars, televisions, flush toilets, and so on. The debate must take into consideration all of these factors.

EK: In other words, mental health care is part of all of health care.

OK: It's part of all of health care, and there is no written statement of what society ought to spend on it. It may well be, as productivity increases, that a greater proportion of human productivity will go toward caring for human beings. This makes a lot of sense to me.

EK: Thank you very much.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DAPHNE MERKIN

After the Massacre: Life Under a Low Sky

Everything hangs low in Jerusalem, even the sky. The weather seems close at hand, though it is less of a constant theme than it is in New York, where nightly the news is stopped dead so overcommunicative weather-people can expound on atmospheric conditions. If life were more of a teleological process, Jerusalem could be said to be a city of primary causes: love, war, death, bullets, milk, children, newspapers, bread, sun, rain, water, children, car crashes, children, children, children. Don't you see a lot of *soldiers carrying guns,* people who've never been to Israel always want to know. But once you're there you get used to the soldiers and the guns slung casually across their backs like knapsacks. What you don't get used to is the pride Israelis take in their young, the way adults seem to bestow a collective indulgent glance upon them. The rare instance of teenage violence aside (several months ago two fifteen-year-old boys from an affluent suburb of Tel Aviv killed a cab driver for kicks, in a case eerily reminiscent of Leopold and Loeb) and the occasional article on the problems of adolescence notwithstanding (the cover of *The Jerusalem Report* for the week of March 10th proclaimed, "Don't Judge a Kid by His Leather," promising to divulge "The Surprising Truth about Israel's Much-Maligned Youth"), the concept of Generation X is inconceivable in Israel.

I had arrived with my four-year-old daughter at the end of February, looking for a way out of New York and its self-involved buzz – out of my life and its cramped dramas, as well. There was nothing further I wanted to know about Tonya Harding or Nancy Kerrigan (by the time I returned the latter was already parodying herself, gotten up in blonde Valkyrie braids on *Saturday Night Live*), and nowhere further to go for the moment in the divorce proceedings I was enmeshed in. Israel beckoned like a clean slate – surely, that has always been part of its appeal. And sitting on the TWA flight, waiting to take off, I felt I had been right. While the American crew explained everything to do with seat belts and emergency procedures and life-rafts at exhaustive length, the Hebrew-speaking steward came on with a few succinct, slightly mocking instructions, as if to say, *You know the rules. Try and stick to them, okay, bubbele?*

It was a cool, clear Monday afternoon when we got into Ben-Gurion airport, where the luggage carts were free for the taking; no fumbling for

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dollar bills and trying to coax them through some gizmo. I had come to Israel looking for a vacation, but that may have been my mistake to begin with. (May the Israeli Department of Tourism forgive me: I wish the country more visitors that can be served those overwrought breakfasts, mile after buffet mile of herring and scrambled eggs and rolls and cheeses and more brands of yogurt than would seem economically viable.) The vicissitudes of jet lag and traveling with a young daughter could have explained why I took sleeping pills for the first few nights but didn't quite suffice to explain why I continued to take Ambien – a friendly white pill with little hangover effect – for my entire stay. Perhaps it was something in the air, an atmosphere of vigilance that enters the nervous system of all but the most thick-skinned visitors, making it hard to let down one's guard and allow sleep to unravel the cares of the day. "You don't come to Israel for a vacation," said a friend I called late into my second restless night. "It's too tense here." For the first few days it rained, and on the fifth day, a Friday during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan which also happened to be the Jewish holiday of Purim, Baruch Goldstein (née Benjamin, "Benjy" to his friends) opened fire, with or without an accomplice, on the bent-over Arab worshipers at the Ma'arat HaMachpela (the Cave of the Patriarchs) in Hebron.

News in Israel travels like brushfire; official reports lag behind even more than they do in larger, less incendiary countries. The thirty-nine-year-old physician had started shooting at 5:30 in the morning. It was only 8:15 on that same morning that my nephew, who studies at a religious high school in Efrat – a settlement founded a decade or so ago, situated midway between Hebron and Israel – was standing in my sister's kitchen with the grim report. The first accounts making the rounds put the number of dead higher than it actually turned out to be (forty instead of twenty-nine), and, more curiously, had Goldstein committing suicide in a final deluded act of martyrdom. Perhaps that second, incorrect touch was wishful, a way of transmuting a disastrous, explosive act into something more profoundly self-sacrificial, however misguided. Whatever the explanation, the full import of the event was sensed from the start: Israel is a Jewish country, after all, and there is nothing more endemic to the Jewish sensibility than a tragic sense of consequence. How would this affect the nascent, infinitely fragile peace process? What use would Hamas, the radical Palestinian faction which was growing stronger all the time and which spat on Arafat's efforts to claim himself as representative of the people's will, make of this solitary act of butchery? *What would the neighbors think?*

The birds were twittering outside my sister's apartment on a street in Jerusalem filled, like many others, with wash hanging out to dry, garbage

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bins, scavenging cats, and everywhere the color of yellow stone. Whereas vast parts of Tel Aviv have been constructed of concrete resembling nothing so much as the gray cardboard backing that comes with shirts from the laundry, this yellow stone – the cost of which varies depending on its gradations of pink, white or beige – has been the mandated building block of Jerusalem since 1948. A conference-hopping Rumanian architect whom I have lunch with across the street from the King David Hotel at the YMCA dining room – no plebian institutional mess hall this, but an airy, glass-paned venue for the city's non-kosher cognoscenti – explains that there is something about Jerusalem stone which apparently refracts the light differently. (He is part of the opposition to an ongoing civic movement agitating to use a variety of materials for construction.) If you respond to Israel, if you overlook its many unpleasantnesses, ranging from scratchy toilet-paper to the all-powerful "Bezek" – the nationalized phone company which periodically goes on strike, scrambling numbers and making it impossible to confirm flights into or out of the country – it is my contention that sooner or later it will be the color of those yellow stones you are responding to. It will linger in your bones, like an ache, making it difficult to write the country off as a contentious and divisive mirage otherwise known as a Jewish homeland.

After the massacre, the blitz of accusations and recriminations began within what seemed like a matter of minutes. Who was to blame? And for what? Americans, for producing this foreign implant? "Neta zar," were the exact disdainful words Rabin used, pointing a finger at all those unwholesome immigrants with their deranged allegiances to Meir Kahane, *et al.,* which a chronically people-hungry country like Israel was forced to take in – to welcome, yet! Or maybe it was the government, for allowing the settlers to think their expansionist vision had a particle of reality. . . . Or maybe it was Shimon Peres himself, for pursuing an accommodationist, possibly self-destructive peace policy – and in the process giving fuel to those who were waiting for an opportunity to prove him wrong.

Amos Oz, Cynthia Ozick, and Abe Rosenthal weighed in on *The New York Times* Op-Ed page with widely divergent, panoramic views, suggesting either that Israel was too aggressive or that Jews were too contrite. Meanwhile, Israeli commentators tried to study the tragedy under a microscope, providing a closer examination of the volatile intertwining of Biblicism and nationalism that led to the redemptive theology of the tiny Kach movement to which Goldstein belonged. Aviezer Ravitzky, a professor of Jewish thought at Hebrew University, suggested in *The Jerusalem Post* that within any given society and every religion – including Orthodox Judaism – there will always be a fringe group of people whose core identity comes from demonizing the Other: " 'If I have an enemy, I

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know who I am. I am different from the Other. I am superior to the other'." Ravitzky, who has plumbed the literature of Kahanism, went on to explain, "You don't need Judaism to understand Kahanism. Kahanism is the Jewish expression of a universal phenomenon." And an Israeli professor of Jewish history who is interviewed on the evening news from his cozy post at the Wilson Center for International Studies in Washington D.C. solemnly advanced the theory that Kahane's adversarial politics had its origins in urban street encounters between Jewish working-class youths and "African-Americans." Listening to him, I wondered how many Israeli viewers recognized either the *au courant* rhetoric of rage or the equally *au courant* appellation "African-Americans." What is clear, in any event, is that the long shadow of political correctness has fallen across the sunny groves of Middle Eastern academe.

"It's fashionable to be on the left," says Naftali Lavie, the former consul general to New York and Shimon Peres's closest aide from 1974 to 1977. Lavie, whose younger brother is the controversial Chief Rabbi of Israel, has recently published a widely-praised memoir of his grueling escape from the Nazis and of his years advising those at the helm of power, from Dayan to Begin to Peres. Its title, *Am KeLavi* (*Nation Like a Lion*) is a witty pun on his own last name, and the book contains the juicy revelation that King Hussein met with Prime Minister Golda Meir in 1973 eleven days before the start of the Yom Kippur War in order to warn her of Syria and Egypt's impending attack. Lavie's British-born wife, Joan, serves us coffee and homemade cake in the living room. "Give the Arabs everything they want," Lavie says. "It's an illusion. Those Arabs who are involved in the peace process are not in a position to deliver peace." He speaks with the slightly jaded fluency of someone used to dealing with philanthropic, know-it-all Americans. "The bosses of the masses are religious fanatics. . . . Their leadership is blackmailed by extremists, of which Hamas is the established expression. For religious and nationalistic reasons, they won't accept the peace process. . . . We Jews are helping Arabs to use the massacre. . . . It's a certain weakness on the part of Jews – wanting to appease the whole world."

Theodore Herzl convened the first World Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland – a peaceful and verdant spot. How differently might the question of Jewish statehood played itself out had the early Zionists accepted the British offer of a homeland in Uganda a few years later, rather than holding out for that small piece of the parched and chaotic Middle East known as Palestine?

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The day after the massacre, late on a Saturday afternoon, I pay a visit to my uncle, Mordechai Breuer, an historian of modern German-Jewish culture who lives in the leafy, quintessentially Jerusalemite neighborhood of Rechavia. There is something about both the neighborhood and my uncle's apartment which is serenely unchanging. Rechavia was originally settled by Central European and German immigrants in the late twenties and thirties (Gershom Scholem lived there). Many of the buildings are Bauhaus-inspired, and they are still largely inhabited by elderly natives of proud cities like Frankfurt or Prague, who have adamantly less of the Levantine about them than the other immigrant groups who flowed into Israel in the wake of World War II. To fully understand the sociology of a neighborhood such as Rechavia – dotted with tiny flower stands, the air filled with the strains of classical music, including that of the now-taboo Richard Wagner – one would probably have to be familiar with the work of Israel's Nobel Prize-winning novelist, S. Y. Agnon. It is an area redolent of a more cosmopolitan, less polarized time in the city's history, when the secular and the sacred coexisted in relative harmony, and people of vastly differing levels of religious observance lived next to each other instead of in segregated enclaves. As for my uncle's apartment, it is equivalent in size to a small two-bedroom in New York City. He and his wife have raised seven children (who among them have given him fifty-eight grandchildren) here, and I cannot remember it ever looking very different than it does now with just the two of them living there: ordered and immaculate and unprepossessing, its greatest luxury an absence of distraction.

Shortly after I arrive, my uncle dashes off to attend the *mincha* service which ends the Sabbath, and I pass the time in conversation with his wife, Simcha. When he returns he performs the *havdalah* ceremony. One of the briefest in the panopoly of Jewish rituals, this blessing made over candle, wine, and perfumed cloves marks the distinction between the inactivity of the Sabbath and the start of the weekaday. Afterward, we sit down to talk, but our conversation is interrupted by a constantly ringing phone: Congratulations are pouring in on the birth that day of a new grandchild, his youngest daughter's tenth-born.

I ask my uncle his opinion of the recent debacle, and he gives a pained shrug. Referring to the shrill note of blame sounded by Rabin on down, he comments that it is all too easy to finger American Jewry for sending Israel misfits on the order of Goldstein. Still, he points out that the combination of education and violence that characterizes many of the late Meir Kahane's followers is rarely to be found among Israeli opponents to the peace process. "Of course we have our thugs," he says, "but they are mostly primitive people, from poor or uncultured homes.

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Someone like this, a doctor . . ." He stops and shakes his head. Then he laughs and confides that he has succeeded in avoiding a fellow synagogue-goer this evening, a man who disapproves of my uncle's involvement with Oz VeShalom, the religious branch of the peace movement. My uncle is sure that the man wanted to engage him in a debate about Goldstein's action.

The next day it rains again. For abstruse calendrical reasons, Purim is officially celebrated on Friday in Tel Aviv and on Sunday in Jerusalem. Custom dictates that the traditional Purim meal, the *se'uda,* is held in the afternoon, so in the late morning I venture with my daughter and some American friends into downtown Jerusalem. The annual pre-Purim festivities – a three-day street fair featuring clowns, face-painting, cotton candy and balloons – have been, my sister pointed out, markedly less riotous than usual. Today, many of the galleries and boutiques selling ceramics, jewelry, and silver in the artsy, Soho-ish area known as Nachalat Shiv'ah are closed; those shops that are open are eerily empty, and one kiosk owner tells me that business is off for this time of year. In the taxi on the way home I decide to conduct an on-the-spot survey of the average Israeli's – as opposed to the intelligentsia's – response to Goldstein's action. The cabdriver, who is of Yemenite extraction, seems bemused by my effort to engage him in serious conversation about events that neither of us have any hand in. "Your Hebrew so good," he says. "You like Israel?" He wants to talk about his own year-long stay in Queens, but when I press him, he says quietly, with another of those shrugs that I will come to think of as a national tic: "Haya beseder." *Beseder* is the Hebrew equivalent of the English *okay,* except that it is a fraction more affirmative than a mere *okay*, meaning something closer to "as it should be." He goes on, "They kill us, and sometimes we kill them."

Was it ever different? "The spirit of hatred and fanaticism imbedded [*sic*] in the heart of the Arab Muslims against everything that is non-Muslim has been perpetually nurtured by the Islamic religion." This statement, from a letter written to French Prime Minister Léon Blum in 1936, signed by among others Sulayman al-Asad, the father of the current president of Syria, continues: "There is no hope that the situation will ever change." The authors of this document were six prominent members of the Alawite community, a breakaway group from Islam situated in northwestern Syria, and they adduced the condition of the Jews in Palestine to be "the strongest and most explicit evidence" of Islamic intransigence.

Naftali Lavie maintains that in the face of such historical antagonism, the right questions aren't being asked. "Should we evacuate the settlements for peace?" is less to the point than asking, "Is Arafat really in a

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position to deliver peace, when he can't even deliver on his promise to annul paragraph nine of the PLO covenant, which affirms the organization's commitment to the destruction of the state of Israel?"

We went to Eilat anyway. Eilat is Israel's fling at being a genuine tourist destination for European sun-seekers, its pretend resort-by-the-sea. In my almost three decades of traveling in Israel, I had never deigned to visit Eilat, so intent was I on imbibing the climactic, Zionist-fostered scenarios of my upbringing: Massada, Rachel's Tomb, Ein Gedi, and in those pre-Intifada days, the Ma'arat HaMachpelah. This time I had planned on stopping at the resort, on acting as if Israel were the sort of country you could actually, wholeheartedly *vacation* in, and I wasn't going to let Baruch Goldstein stop me, even if it meant suspending vast amounts of disbelief.

At 3:30 on Monday afternoon we – my sister, her fifteen-year-old daughter (who had successfully begged off from school in our honor), myself and my daughter – left for the central bus depot to pick up the van which would take us to Atorot, the airport about half an hour outside of Jerusalem which services Arkia, Israel's sole domestic carrier. (Since Eilat is a five-hour drive from Jerusalem, we had decided to fly.) Inside the van the curtains were drawn: "Israelis love curtains everywhere," my sister says cheerfully, but when my daughter tries to pull them aside the swarthy man sitting up front next to the driver turns around and sharply tells her not to. I had noticed this man immediately upon entering the van; I had also noticed the anxious woman sitting in front of us, who wanted to know if anyone had checked the unclaimed piece of luggage on the seat next to her. (Someone does so.) Such innocuous-seeming stray items are Israel's Achilles' heel: There is always the chance that they could be artfully disguised lethal weapons rather than repositories for groceries or toiletries. In the days following the massacre – as is true each time there is a violent flare-up – the tension heightens around the possibility, unspoken but omnipresent, of terrorist retaliation. (A month after I return to New York, a nineteen-year-old Arab detonates an explosive-filled car in the northern town of Afula, killing himself and seven Israelis, and wounding forty-five other Israelis, many of them children. Hamas promptly claims him as a member and calls the bombing a reaction to Hebron.)

On the way to the airport we pass through the Arab village of Shuafat. Through the van's curtains, the village looks rundown and under-occupied; there are men standing in clusters around doorways and young boys in shapeless sweaters who gaze after our Israeli license plate with undisguised hostility. The atmosphere in the van thickens with apprehension. (Several days later, on the way back to Jerusalem, there will

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be another long moment of held-in breath, the same precarious assumption that we are entitled to pass through enemy territory unharmed. It is nighttime when we return, and the low-built Arab houses emit a lurid blue glow. My sister tells me she has heard that Arabs tend to paint at least one of their walls turquoise to ward off the evil eye and prefer this slightly melancholy shade of fluorescent light.)

Atorot itself is small – approximately the size of the airport on Nantucket Island. This being a Jewish country rather than a WASP stopover, there is a kiosk standing ready with food (candy bars, soda, and ice cream as well as the characteristically Israeli sandwich known as *shakshuka* – pita bread containing an egg, onion, and tomato) to ease any hunger pangs that might strike on the fifty-minute flight to Eilat. In the interval between having our passports scrutinized, checking our luggage, and answering a barrage of security questions ("Did you leave your luggage unobserved at any time? Has anyone given you anything to put in your luggage? Do you understand why we are asking you these questions?"), I talk with Eli, the security guard who accompanied our van driver and is now waiting around the airport, puffing furiously on a cigarette. I ask him if his presence is standard procedure, or whether extra precautions are being taken in the wake of Hebron. He gives a dazzling gap-toothed smile by way of polite resistance to discussing the situation. One of the stranger aspects of being in a country that operates under as high a level of strain as Israel does is that everyone feels compelled to act as if this strain were normative. He is joined by Itzik, the driver, and in the tacit way such things are decided, the two of them agree that I can be trusted. They take me outside and show me the dents in the side of their van, the shattered rearview mirror. Eli seems almost apologetic: "Only boys throw rocks," he says, "never grown-ups." When I inquire how and when they will decide that the situation has cleared – that Israeli vehicles will no longer be vulnerable going through Arab areas – he replies: "L'tzorach ha'inyan."

"L'tzorach ha'inyan": *According to the need*. There is something about Eli that is enormously reassuring. It could be his un-macho yet securely masculine manner, or perhaps it is something more superficial, something having to do with his melting eyes and aquiline features, which remind me of Omar Sharif. At any rate, I don't point out that his answer is in the nature of a tautology: The situation will no longer require it when the situation no longer requires it. It occurs to me that tautologies have a Zen-like logic all their own, providing a solace that is grounded in a passive acceptance of a fate as unknowable as it is inevitable: Peace will come when war is over.

If the Middle East were a movie set, I would want to write in a part

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for a good-looking, multicultural Israeli like Eli, who goes on to ask with charmingly inverted syntax, putting the cart before the horse, "What does it help, war?" Then, too, if the Middle East were a movie set, Eilat would be perfectly cast as a wannabe tropical getaway, with its ominous Graham Greene touches (security guards who loom at the exit of the hotel in order to check your key) and its dated, slightly tacky notion of the deluxe. Think of Miama Beach before its renaissance or of a third-class Caribbean island. The wonder of it is that Eilat exists at all, with a strip of hotels fronting the water, where tall drinks with little parasols bobbing in them are served up poolside and time-share schemes are pushed on the unwary.

HERE BEGINS YOUR VACATION, announces the sign in the Eilat airport, ENJOY IT. Ah, I can relax at last, book myself a manicure at the hotel salon (never mind that I am given an appointment only to discover that there hasn't been a manicurist in residence for six months), watch television (never mind that cable has not yet come to Eilat and that the only clear reception is on the channel carrying a promotional video for the hotel), take hot baths or long showers (never mind that the water is lukewarm and the water pressure varies from low to nonexistent), and eat myself happy at the Brasserie, a kosher French restaurant where the rolls are proffered in no-nonsense descriptions of "brown" or "white" (no sourdough flights of fancy here). The chef, married to an Israeli, is one Manfred Hanover from Germany. When he comes around to our table in his white apron and toque, he enters into an intense conversation with my sister about how far innovative cooks can stretch the limits of kosher cuisine, which dictate that milk and meat be kept eternally separate; there is much praise for Rich's non-dairy creamer, a soy-based American product that has been available here only in the last year.

My room at the King Solomon – nominally a five-star hotel (a *kibbutznik*'s idea of a five-star hotel, I think huffily to myself) and considered to be the best in Eilat until it was eclipsed by the isolated and understated Princess – looks out on a Holiday Inn sign, beaming its moniker into the night in green neon Hebrew letters. Green lights, be they beckoning or garish, always remind me of Gatsby, but Gatsby would surely be staying at the Princess – all snobby and white with the reddish Edomite mountains rising outside its sheer glass walls. Walking around the undeniably elegant hotel's marble lobby and peering out at its pools and sundecks, whirlpool and water chute, intricately connected by Venetian-style bridges, I have my first real glimpse of *calme, luxe et volupté*. But perhaps such grand pleasure palaces are contrary to the real spirit of Eilat. The Princess is rumored to be cold and badly run, and with its amibitious rates (ranging from about $350 per day for a regular room to nearly $900 for more lush ac-

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commodations), it is hushed and empty compared to our own package-priced King Solomon, where they've run out of poolside chaises by ten o'clock in the morning. As we drag some abandoned lounge chairs into the sun – self-service appearing to be the order of the day – my sister, a resident of Jerusalem for eight years, waxes nostalgic for the glory days of Taba. Taba, and its sole occupant, the casually chic Sonesta hotel, sat on a much-disputed piece of land at the southernmost tip of Eilat. Within spitting distance of both Jordan (King Hussein's summer residence is in Akaba, which flanks Eilat on the East) and Egypt, it was finally, after international arbitration, given back to Egypt in the late eighties.

Around the pool there are swimming contests and live music and all sorts of desperately festive, Poconos-like touches. My daughter insists on my accompanying her into the water, which seems to have a scrim of dirt floating on it. Beyond the hotel there are official tourist sights: the Yellow Submarine, where for the equivalent of $25 you can descend deep into the Red Sea and look at coral reefs (which turn out to be gray and brown in their natural state), and the underwater observatory where you can watch the fish go by. One fish looks like it's wearing a striped sweater, and another looks, as my niece astutely observes, like Arafat, with a trailing headpiece (his trademark *kaffiyeh*) for a fin. True, there is a soft sonic boom that, for a moment, frightens people in the observatory's café where we stop to have Cokes and some cloyingly sweet chocolate cake, and it's hard to ignore the irate German woman who argues with the security guards that all her friends are *inside* the hotel. But Eilat is, withal, a reprieve from the sustained watchfulness of Jerusalem, a vigilance so quiet and efficient – so routine – as to be almost indiscernible. However surreal it may strike one when set against the blood-stained backdrop of the Middle East, Eilat is a place where French, German, and Dutch tourists mill around, searching out tans and shopping bargains. It is proof positive that, along with the carnage and anxiety, an ordinary country is going on, replete with key rings imported from China and trashy television shows imported from America.

One could even wish, at times, for *less* ordinariness – less, at any rate, of the cultural debris which advanced Western civilization throws up in its wake. If the glitzier forms of entertainment have of necessity been slower to develop in this war-torn nation, with each of my successive visits Israel appears to be catching up. The country has always relied on hit American shows – *Dynasty, Dallas, L.A. Law, Beverly Hills 90210* – to distract the attention of its stressed citizens, but with the addition in the past few years of cable television and, more recently, a new channel of original programming, there is more to choose from. Talk shows are all the rage: Dan Shilon's gets the highest ratings, and with his deliberately

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motley crew of guests (Naftali Lavie tells me that he was paired as a guest with a petty criminal) he seems to qualify as an Israeli Charlie Rose and Arsenio Hall rolled into one, provocative in a *haimish* way. The week I return from Eilat to Jerusalem the Miss Israel Pageant airs; I watch it with my two American-born nieces and am surprised by the wobbly, untoned thighs of many of the contestants – dumbstruck as well by the frenzied nature of Israeli television commercials. The ads are numbingly overt and quasi-pornographic, as in one for Asuta breath spray, in which the concept of "dragon breath" is literally enacted while curvaceous, heavily made-up actresses swoon in horror.

"Call waiting" has come to Israel, which is a frightening prospect in a country where people feel free to telephone after seven o'clock in the morning, and there is a twenty-four-hour supermarket adjacent to the Jerusalem Plaza Hotel. The Ben & Jerry's in Jerusalem's new, multi-level shopping mall next to the soccer stadium and across the street from the biblical zoo is, down to the napkins, an exact replica of its American counterparts except for the Hebrew lettering. I sit there on a Saturday night with my nieces and nephews, who crave ever more scoops of Cookies & Cream, and watch Jerusalem's self-conscious high-school set – the girls with their identical platform sandals and long hair, the boys with earrings and brush cuts. They dance around near the jukebox, which plays songs that were hits several years ago, with an emphasis on the work of Meat Loaf and Joe Cocker. "Do they think this is a disco?" my younger niece asks indignantly. The concept of the *disco* as signifying all that is glamorous, risque, and very American still floats around here, confirming the sense I have that I am adrift in a gentle time warp – that Israeli popular culture is a pesky little sister, forever tagging behind and trying to copy attitudes that have already been abandoned by its disdainful older sibling.

This sense grows even stronger when I take a taxi into Tel Aviv for the day. Tel Aviv is said to be the city of choice for the artistically forward-looking or the merely sophisticated, but I have never found it to be quite as cosmopolitan as it is strenuously imitative. I've arranged to meet a friend, the writer Ida Fink, for lunch at the café in HaBima, the national theater. Fink is the author of two scrupulously unsentimental accounts of evading the Holocaust's grasp – the first of which, *A Scrap of Time*, won Israel's Anne Frank Prize. It is almost a week since the massacre, but when we aren't discussing the vexed lives that writers lead or whether Israel has a literary mafia, as one novelist here has charged, the massacre is the subject that dominates our conversation.

One major difference between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv is that while in the former city the predominating attitude to the ongoing conflict is

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that the answer lies in getting tougher with the Arabs, in the latter it is that the answer lies in getting tougher with the Jews. Everywhere I went in Jerusalem, I encountered what I suppose could be thought of as neo-conservative views of the massacre. Judicious and self-protective, these views are espoused, in the main, by Israel's religious and Sephardic Jews. *No one raises a fuss when Arabs kill Jews. They've never stopped killing us. Has the PLO ever publicly apologized for any of its terrorist attacks? Have any of its leaders taken out an ad stating his apologies on behalf of his people the way Rabin did in their papers?*

In Tel Aviv, where a Peace Now rally is being planned for the upcoming Saturday, I find the attitude of wholesale condemnation and self-laceration which one has come to expect from those on the Israeli left – secular Jews, academics and artists. It is an attitude meant for consumption by the foreign press (indeed it plays better outside the country than within it) and for anyone, Jew and non-Jew alike, made uncomfortable by the idea that the people of the Book have made themselves familiar with the non-Bookish enterprise of war. *Look what we've gone and done now, with our crazy capitulation to religious fanatics who don't want to make peace with the Arabs. How can we protest the enemy's terrorist attacks when we can't contain our own settlers? We should go into mourning, and then we should throw the settlers out.*

But Tel Aviv also means – and it is this aspect of it, I think, which makes it easier on the nerves than Jerusalem – forgetting the state of the country's soul in pursuit of the state of one's inner chic. It means being taken to Alexander's, Tel Aviv's place to eat and be seen, for dinner. I'm told it's impossible to get into Alexander's for lunch on Friday unless you're a regular. The restaurant may lack peppermills, but there are magazine racks near the front door as well as subtly amusing touches in the industrial-look toilets upstairs, so subtle that I have a hard time figuring out that the pedal on the floor is how you flush. At the table behind us a group of Manhattan-thin women and several men who look like variations on Jean-Pierre Leaud in *The 400 Blows* avidly discuss movies. Are they in them? Do they make them? Or simply see them? Spielberg has just been here in a blaze of publicity to open *Schindler's List*. In one of the many interviews he's given to the Israeli press, the director ruefully conceded that "Jerusalem of Gold," which closed the American version of the film, struck a wrong note with Israeli audiences (for whom the song is a tired anthem) and has been changed to the more fittingly elegiac "Eli, Eli." Although Spielberg himself in all his newly Jewish celebrity has been embraced by the country, his movie was given a distinctly less enthusiastic response.

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Is it possible to go away for two weeks and come back only to find one has ceased relating to the context one left behind? I came home and forgot to watch the Academy Awards until they were half over, I who had always looked forward to them for weeks ahead of time. I went to a family brunch where conversation turned to the open declarations of anti-Semitism made by Louis Farrakhan and Khalid Abdul Muhammad. We discussed how for people like us, Jews born after World War II, such racist invective comes as a shock in a way it wouldn't have for the generations before us – that we had grown up in a period of post-Holocaust goodwill which seemed destined to come to a close. As I listened, I wondered to myself why the creation of the state of Israel had not, over the span of nearly half a century, more crucially altered the landscape of Jewish identity. Was the cushiness of life in America so much more attractive a prospect than the complex allure of life among one's own in a foreign, troubled land? By what accounting had one kind of vulnerability – that of being a Jew in a Christian country – been deemed less costly than the vulnerability of being a Jew in a Jewish state, albeit one fringed by enemies?

I went to two Passover seders where we concluded, as we do every year, with the axiomatic recitation of "Next Year in Jerusalem" – as though Israel were still Palestine and the whole country no more than a mirage.

It's been a month since I've been back in my native city, where the sky is something whose existence you take on faith, immured behind tall buildings. I'm back to reading the paper and returning the messages on my answering machine, back to frantically hailing cabs or descending into the subway, chasing after my own life as one does in New York. In my head I'm slouching toward expatriation, not sure I have the courage or the energy to do so. At a book awards ceremony, I mention to someone that I'm entertaining the thought of moving to Israel, and she says to me confidently, "You couldn't, you have too much at stake here." But do I? I find myself fighting with old friends, impatient with the scenery they inhabit, impatient too with the image others have of me. Are all dreams of expatriation no more than dreams of exiting the self as circumscribed by all-too-familiar others?

Like a glimpse of a truer reality, I keep before me the image of a quiet street in a distant country – ordinary in an extraordinary way – where the sky hangs low and the stones give off an ancient, yellow light. I will find my way there, and wander home.

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MARK KURLANSKY

Visiting Auschwitz

I just got another one in the mail – the third time in a year. A picture postcard of a cemetery. All three cards were of the same Jewish cemetery and each was sent by a Jew, as though this were how Jews keep in touch – by sending pictures of the graveyard. The cemetery is in Prague, and yes, it is a picturesque and historic cemetery. But a block away is Europe's oldest functioning synagogue, and though postcards of it are available, no one sent me one of it.

It is becoming apparent that Jews are increasingly focused on death. This is a very un-Jewish thing. There is probably no religion that talks less about death. Cemeteries are not supposed to be next to synagogues because life and death are to be separated. Descendants of priests, the Cohanim, are not to gaze on dead bodies or walk in cemeteries. Christianity at one time had as its symbol a fish signifying the life of Peter, and only later, not coincidentally as Christians broke away from Judaism, did they take on the cross, an implement of torture, the symbol of Jesus's agony and martyrdom. I sometimes wonder as I watch Poland enjoy a lucrative tourist industry from foreign Jews who profess a hatred for Poland but must see the cemeteries and death camps, if Judaism is not undergoing a similar transformation.

In Lódz, the old Polish mill town that produced so many of the Jewish families now residing in Paris, Antwerp, London, New York and Jerusalem, I wanted to meet some of the remaining Jews. I knew a young Lódz Jew with a beautiful voice who had learned to be a cantor in Israel. He told me that they sometimes got minyans. It was Saturday morning and I went looking for the synagogue, which was difficult to find because, like many shops and offices in this boom-and-bust commercial town, it was in the alley behind the buildings. There is a wonderful world of street life and commerce behind the ornate buildings of Lódz. I found the handsome little pink synagogue, but it was locked. A man working on his car in the same alley said that it was sometimes open but certainly wouldn't be this morning. He looked up between the buildings at the gray sky and said, "It's raining. Besides, it's Saturday. Maybe on Monday."

Where were the Jews of Lódz on a Saturday morning? They were out

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looking for foreign Jews to meet. What was the best way to run into the Jews from America, Western Europe and Israel? They waited for them on weekends in the cemetery. In the past five years most Central European Jewish communities have grown, as assimilated Jews have begun reasserting their Jewish heritage. The Budapest Community of one hundred thousand is now thought to include one hundred twenty thousand members. Last year the struggling Prague community had one thousand registered members and increased to thirteen hundred this year. But Western Jews go to Central Europe to see death. Since the fall of Communism and opening of the borders to easy, visa-free travel, the growth of Jewish communities has attracted far less interest than the newly accessible concentration camps and cemeteries. Thus Poland, which has history but less Jewish life than its neighbors, has become a popular Jewish destination.

The restored old town of Warsaw, the first postwar project, seems sterile and too preciously preserved. The untouched medieval city of Cracow is better, and the summer countryside of southern Poland with its rolling hills and wildflowers is beautiful, in spite of the pollution and the names like "Oswiecim" which keep reminding visitors of where they are. You don't find many tourists going to Poland to take in the countryside. So many tourists are Jewish that local entrepreneurs have had to start making the little carved Hasidim dolls less anti-Semitic in order to move them – make the eyes a little less sunken and demonic and ease up on the nose. Foreigners come to see what is left of the ghetto, the Jewish cemeteries and the death camps – Sobibór, Maidanek, Belzec, Treblinka, Chelmno, Stutthof, Auschwitz-Birkenau. Poland has literally an embarrassment of riches in the field of Holocaust history. The Nazis didn't leave anything to see at the Warsaw ghetto, but a heroic monument to the resisters was erected. Tourists come by the busload, sometimes even posing for group pictures on the steps. Nearby a man sells assorted souvenirs, mostly books. The vendor is ready with an ink pad and stamp to mark the endpapers of the books with his Warsaw Ghetto stamp. Not far away from the flowered summer hills of southern Poland is Cracow, with its untouched medieval center that makes it Poland's best bid for a tourism center. Cracow also has location going for it. When tourists get off the train from Warsaw they are greeted at the platform by eager taxi drivers offering, "Taxi? Hotel? Auschwitz?"

The splendidly preserved walls of this rare city are papered in seemingly every eye-level space with posters that say "AUSCHWITZ" in large block letters. "Go to Birkenau and be back in Cracow at 4 p.m.," one of them advertised. A thirty-minute taxi ride from Cracow is the most famous death camp of them all, with some half million visitors a year. When a driver gets an Auschwitz fare he merrily informs the others at the stand, "I'm off to Auschwitz, bye!" After all, it pays far better

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money than going back and forth to Kazmierz, the Jewish section on the other side of the small town. Auschwitz is a good fare, usually quoted first in German marks, apparently on the supposition that most people who want to go are German – which does not seem to be the case. My taxi driver was extremely jovial, a breach of etiquette for which I instantly hated him. We flew through the hilly countryside in his Mercedes while he talked about what a great car a Mercedes was.

"Yes, the perfect way to go to Auschwitz," I said.

He slammed the dashboard good-humoredly, repeated the joke and laughed.

The landscape between Cracow and Oswiecim has probably not changed much since the camp was operating – rolling farmland, yellow strips of harvested hay fields, orchards of branches drooping with the weight of summer apples, towns with traditional log houses and even some horse-drawn carts. Coming into Oswiecim, there is the wide railroad yard, a junction of so many tracks that it appears to be the outskirts of a major city. The Germans were said to have chosen the spot for its rail connections. For all those tracks there had been only twelve thousand people living there, the majority of whom were Jews. There is said to be one Jew left in Oswiecim, and he, not surprisingly, is a recluse.

Outside the death camp is a parking lot filled with tour buses. Then there is a bookshop and a snack bar and a pretty green spot with rows of two-story brick barracks and a small gateway in the shade of a slinky willow with the words "Arbeit Macht Frei" in decorative ironwork over the gate. Go in the summer when the wildflowers are in bloom and the seedlings the doomed prisoners were forced to plant are verdant rows of tall, straight, shady trees. Different tour guides are available in different languages and with different agendas. Some talk about martyred priests, others about the heroic anti-Fascists. There are also survivors walking as though in a trance, leading their families.

Many of the barracks have been turned into national pavilions, each displaying the suffering of its country, some with brutal documentary style, others seeming almost artsy. Auschwitz has become a kind of World's Fair of genocide. The new Catholic visitors' center outside the camp, the outcome of the bitter squabble over the Carmelite convent, is just one more attempt to claim the moral high ground here on the killing site. Every institution with any pretense of moral authority wants the last word on Auschwitz, and there is an international committee that is eternally debating what to do with it. The place remains incomprehensible and its questions as unanswerable as those of Job. The moral voice tends to fall to the greatest victims, who were the Jews. As Polish Jewish journalist Konstanty Gebert said, "The world owes us the right to exist because we have suffered. However, on the pinnacle of suffering there is

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room for just one." The problem is that there is very little a truly moral voice can say. Meanwhile, Auschwitz survivors do their duty and sit on the committee, forced not only to think about but to visit the site of their nightmares.

Auschwitz shows things that are beyond commentary – human hair, the eyeglass frames, the piles of toothbrushes, an unremarkable-looking oven, like a bread oven, gallows where prisoners were hanged and walls where they were shot and laboratories where they were worked on. Somehow families drift through this. Many of the visitors weep. Others look stunned. Some look like bored tourists shuffling from exhibit to exhibit, taking snapshots to mark each spot. When I was through, my jovial taxi driver was waiting in the parking lot with a somber, sympathetic face. "Makes you sick, doesn't it," he said. "People shouldn't go here. I don't like this place. They killed my grandfather here."

His grandfather had been among the Polish political prisoners for whom the Germans had first established the camp. But as soon as we got away the mood was broken and he was jovial again. I liked this man now. He seemed to like life and he certainly enjoyed the drive, playing a cassette of German um-pa-pa music which I asked him to change. Again he slapped the dashboard and laughed at the silly irony of it, and switched to a Polish-language recording of "Now It's Time to Say Good-bye for the Summer."

Although many of the people there were Jewish and had traveled with the help of Jewish organizations, I wouldn't say I had a Jewish experience at Auschwitz. I would say I had a Nazi experience. I think there is a need to preserve such places precisely because there is a need to understand what Nazis were, what they did. I don't think Jews are the people who most need this. But they are the ones who are experiencing it the most frequently. They may in part be going to do their share for the cause of remembrance. But often the ones who go are not the ones who need to remember. There seems to be a tremendous confusion about who defines what a Jew is. How often is a Jewish talk, a Jewish lecture, a Jewish film or a Jewish book not about the Holocaust? I have for the past two years been working on a book about European Jewry. People constantly assume I am writing about the Holocaust. No, I say, this is contemporary. They look at me with confusion. I see them thinking, "What is there to say about contemporary Jews?" Then they invariably start talking to me about neo-Nazis.

I do not believe that Jews, as Gebert stated with intended irony, are owed the right to exist because they have suffered, but because they have the right to exist. If suffering were the only legacy of Judaism, it would not be worth continuing. Sartre wrote in 1946, "If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would have invented him." This statement has always left

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me to wonder if Sartre could distinguish between the real and the invented Jew. The true issue is that if Jews do not define themselves, they will be defined by anti-Semites, or their very close cousins the philo-Semites who define Jews as people who have suffered. What forces Jews ever deeper into this dilemma is historical revisionism, by which another generation of Nazis forces another generation of Jews to focus on the Holocaust. Revisionists are more than maddening quacks insisting the world is flat in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Where there are denials of the facts of the Holocaust there are invariably trails that lead to organized neo-Nazis. For how can anyone support a political movement that once arbitrarily murdered six million people as the official enactment of a state policy? It must be denied in order to be done all over again. The mentality was clearly exposed by an anonymous hand that scrawled on the walls of a Paris suburb, "Auschwitz was a lie," and in the same handwriting, "Gas the Jews."

There is good reason to focus on the Holocaust sites of Central Europe. Since the fall of Communism, revisionism has taken on an even more dangerous form in this part of Europe. I ran into this on my first trip to post-Communist Poland. I was sharing a train compartment with a nineteen-year-old Pole from Cracow. He was very excited to meet an actual Jew. I was his first Jew and he was my first Polish philo-Semite, the weird new breed of Polish anti-Semite. He loved Isaac Bashevis Singer and had read all of his books. Upon learning I was Jewish, he immediately wanted to apologize to me for Gomulka's anti-Zionist campaign of 1968. "That was the greatest disgrace in Polish history," he magnanimously declared. Later he got down to questioning me about the avariciousness of Jews and the length of their noses. The point about the 1968 smear campaign is the claim that the Communists were as bad as the Nazis. If it is accepted that the Communists were as evil as the Nazis, it would not take long to get the idea accepted that the Nazis did no worse than the Communists, that the Holocaust was something like Gomulka's 1968 campaign. This is only one of the dangerous games being played by many establishment figures in today's new united Germany. When it is written in the opinion pages of *Die Welt* that Erich Honecker was "the greatest German murderer and war criminal" it is hard to believe that there is not some international revisionism underfoot. Honecker did not murder six million people, cause the deaths of twice that many, author a Final Solution, establish a massive network of killing centers. If the Nazi record can be reduced to that of Erich Honecker, then the neo-Nazis are in business, and as they like to say, "Germany can be proud again."

Jews have good reason to work actively to keep the memory of the Holocaust, but still, if today's Nazis can turn today's Jews into a people

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who are largely focused on the Holocaust, if this focus increases rather than diminishes with each generation, then the cultural and intellectual richness of Judaism will have been diminished and the Nazis will have achieved a significant victory. While visiting Auschwitz I saw a little French girl, perhaps eight years old, sit down outside one of the display barracks and refuse to go in. "Come on," pleaded her parents, pointing to the sign identifying the display. "This is about the life of the prisoners."

"I don't want to see that," said the little girl, hunkering down on the wooden stoop. How supremely rational this little girl was. I wanted to sit on the stoop too. But instead I went in.

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HILTON KRAMER

An Interview with Helen Frankenthaler

HK: The art scene is now so changed from what it once was. What was it like when you were starting out?

HF: The art scene in 1950 was relatively small and passionately involved in the aesthetic questions and problems of art and in the making and seeing of art. There was a true avant-garde. The marketplace wasn't the issue it is today. The very idea of anyone wanting to buy a painting was more or less remote, and if and when someone did, it seemed to be a miracle, a windfall. When Ben Heller bought Jackson Pollock's "Blue Poles," the gossip spread like a forest fire, from the beaches of the Springs into the art world and beyond. Hot, unbelievable news.

HK: What were the issues? Who were the big figures determining them?

HF: Art and history. New York was striking out on its own, apart from Paris. Paris had been *the* influence for a long time, and in the 1940s it was capped by the influx of all the international artist refugees, Mondrian, Max Ernst, et al. The big first generation New York School figures, who led and dominated the scene when I entered it in 1950, were Jackson Pollock, Bill de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, Hans Hofmann, Adolph Gottlieb, eventually Barney Newman, and all their satellites. More remote, and yet very much a part of this scene, were Robert Motherwell, Clyfford Still, David Smith. Unlike the others, their studios were outside New York, but all of them had essential major roles. That was more or less the original hard-core group. The first generation either were showing or would be showing at Betty Parsons, or at Kootz, or at Charlie Egan's gallery, or eventually at Sidney Janus. At that time, the term "Abstract Expressionist" had not yet been coined. "New York School" or "Abstract Painter" were the words we used to denote identification.

A little later, John Myers, who started the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, would become a force in the underground of the New York School. John was learned, enterprising, energetic, and genuinely enjoyed being

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Editor's Note: This interview took place on December 8, 1992 at The New York Public Library.

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the catalyst and liaison man – in a way a "producer" for painters and poets. He had a very theatrical flair and was a prototype of the culture-finder and mover. Soon after he started his gallery (over an icehouse off Third Avenue and 53rd Street, near the old El), I joined it. Larry Rivers, Grace Hartigan, Robert Goodnough, and Harry Jackson were already there. We comprised what came to be known as the second-generation New York school. The gallery grew, and other galleries spread and opened. The Hansa Gallery, the Stable (Joan Mitchell showed there), et cetera. Toward the end of the fifties, Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland periodically came to New York from Washington, D.C. They spawned the Washington School but were also considered part of the New York aesthetic scene.

In both the first and second generations, I was the youngster. Although I was allied with the Tibor group, I actually related much more to my original mentors of the first generation, whom I also experienced as comrades or peers.

HK: Academics now talk a lot about the role of the Cold War, and so on, in the Abstract Expressionist movement of the fifties. Do you have anything to say about that? Was there a politics to the art scene?

HF: No. Not at all the way we see politics in the art scene today. Politics per se, the news of the world at large, were often a passionate concern, but these considerations were apart from the passionate concerns of art. Striving to make beautiful new paintings that worked was one issue; McCarthyism, the Cold War, were something else. When art is really beautiful and moving, it brings with it not only growing pleasure but also a sense of truth. This truth, this reality – something so spiritual and unnameable, unprovable – is and has always been a political force in itself. Any other kind of political persuasion is usually empty fashion, or dangerous, or both.

HK: Could you say something about the dominant position of the School of Paris in the fifties. Wasn't that what the "smart money," that is, fashion, was buying in the fifties?

HF: The "smart money" in America was still geared to buying the School of Paris in the fifties, but the inner sanctum knew they were "off," that the real McCoy was here. That "smart money" was still being wooed by the cuisine of painting surface, by reputations, and by a kind of entrenched non-thinking Francophilia. The collectors also didn't mind Salon-sized pictures, compared to what seemed to be giant walls of paintings that the New York School was producing. These same collectors also seemed to have Salon-scaled minds and eyes. The European art

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world at that time seemed baffled, shocked, yet interested in what we were all doing. They looked hard, because it obviously annoyed them. With few exceptions, they remained hostile to the idea that our New York art world could compete with theirs in the realm of culture, let alone transcend it. But then they began imitating it, visiting us more and more often.

Today's general audience has different problems. One of the more disturbing is that relatively few in the audience have a frame of reference when it comes to the past. There is little sense of tradition or a philosophic line that has a traceable history. Culture seems to be cloned on the spot. Elitism is seen as fascistic. Beauty is "out." In the extreme, there seem to be orders from a political high command of art: art for causes and art for shock. One likes to think that shock implies a new, as yet unseen, beautiful and meaningful experience. Shock for its own sake, on the other hand, holds nothing for us once the initial tremor has been felt. It gives very little. True art gives a great deal, more and more, everlasting.

Nowadays, many of us find that if we refer to Vivaldi or Auden or Homer or Stalin or Darwin or Hindemith or Duchamp-Villon, we draw a blank. There seems to be no use for reference or tradition. I feel there is a terrible price to pay for this, in terms of our heritage, our current moment, our future. While it is true that history is always being rearranged, I find it dangerous to suddenly try to revise an entire outlook and tradition. Countries that attempted to do this in the past have not met with much success.

HK: In the shift from the fifties to the sixties, who were the artists, if any, you felt most allied with in your work? Was there any exchange of ideas or views or criticism?

HF: Entering the sixties, I was allied more with the remaining first-generation New York school and less with the second generation. Instead, I had friendships and beneficial dialogues with Morris Louis, Ken Noland, and Tony Caro who came here a great deal from London. We visited each other's studios and maintained a healthy sense of competition and mutual enlightenment that led to more work. Both in the fifties and sixties, there was a great deal of exchange among artists in the studios. As one ages, I think the need for this kind of exchange somewhat disappears, but it is also a result of the temper of hard money. Healthy competition disappears.

HK: Did the instant success of Pop Art make any big difference in the way you looked at the art scene? Did the political movements of the sixties – the protests against the Vietnam War, the counterculture, drugs –

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impinge in any way on your thinking about your own work as an artist?

HF: Pop Art made a big difference. Not only did it enlarge the immediate art scene, it also had a huge rippling effect. To some extent, the pop artists might have originally been influenced by the first and second generation of painters, in the same way that the New York School might have been influenced by the School of Paris at the turn of century and by Analytic Cubism. By the same token, the New York School struck out on its own, beyond Paris; replacing Paris as the art capital of the avant-garde. Remember words such as "avant-garde" and "beauty"? Pop artists rebelled against both generations of the New York School. (Ellsworth Kelly and Jack Youngerman were aesthetically something else again, returned "expatriates.") There are many who feel that Pop Art was in part a manifestation of anger at what seemed to be the self-confidence and self-righteousness of the abstract artists (by that time renamed the Abstract Expressionists). In a way, they were correct in the sense that empty versions of the best of the first and second generation New York Schools seemed to be being made across the country like yard goods. Bad pictures, pastiches.

Hilton, to answer the second part of your questions about the political movements of the sixties: as it was in the fifties, political movements during the sixties did not impinge in any way on my concerns as an artist when I was working in my studio and trying to solve paintings. When I leave my studio of course these might be my concerns, but I do not try to have them show up as a spelled-out message in my work. Again, I hope the message lies in aesthetic not political terms. That was my attitude in the fifties, in the sixties, in the seventies, in the eighties, and now in the nineties. Recently, that view seems to be most unpopular.

But back to the sixties. I never thought of myself as a Color Field painter. I connect myself much more with the early fifties, when I was formed and forming my own "signature." It is said, placing me in the sixties, that I spawned Color Field painting, but I had been, for many years before the sixties, concerned with drawing, concerned as much with drawing and space as I was with color.

HK: What was your first major museum show? Could you say something about the experience as an artist of seeing your past work laid out for the public in that way? Is it something you learn from and profit from in your future work, or does it largely represent something that is over and concluded? A sense of continuity or a break? In other words, what aesthetic significance does such an exhibition have for the artist?

HF: My first major museum show was at the Jewish Museum in the

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winter of 1960. My friend, the poet Frank O'Hara, wrote the catalogue, and the show was a retrospective of my work from the fifties. In those days, not any longer, that was a rather unusual event for a young artist. Among other paintings, I showed "Mountains and Sea," which I painted in 1952 at the age of twenty-three, and I received remarks such as "Why enlarge [my] paint rags?" The surface of that painting was once defaced with bubble gum, and once with four-letter words. That show at the Jewish Museum, as well as my Whitney retrospective in 1969, and my recent one instigated by the Fort Worth Museum of Modern Art (and first shown at The Museum of Modern Art in 1989), have all been very helpful to me in terms of my painting concerns. From the point of view of the artist, these summations can be very productive. You see where you have been, where you are, but the most productive thing of all is to suddenly think about where you want to go next, what you still haven't tried, what to experiment with. For example, at my 1969 Whitney show, I found myself literally taking out pencil and paper and making wild, hurried notes about what to try next. It was wonderful for me. And then, of course, one is afraid. But not if you have a sense of "Oh, this boosts me on. I see where this should go, or where I might try to make it go. And then if that doesn't work, something else will come out of that." My mind was flooded with experiments yet to come. There's a kind of "take" on objectively looking at a body of your own work that can be a big help. Just keep working, and if there's a brief halt, consider it part of a whole rhythm. Do what you have to do.

HK: How as an artist do you handle hostility to your work, or for that matter, how do you handle praise?

HF: It depends on where the hostility or praise is coming from. There are perhaps a handful of people whose eyes I more or less trust and count on as an echo. While praise is always a nicer feeling, I have learned that a lot of it is meaningless. And I have learned that unless it is constructive, the hostility that I am used to has to roll off my back and has nothing to do with my survival as an artist, except in terms of false values. I know as much as possible how and where my work is appreciated. And I enjoy that. Nowadays perhaps many of my values are questioned, but there are still many true echoes. I have my own questions about culture today; in many ways I feel we're in for a long Dark Ages. I hope not.

HK: When you spoke about the kind of art that is concerned with beauty and the kind of beauty that generates a sense of truth, I couldn't help but think of the interview that appeared in *The New York Times* the other day

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with Jane Moss, the new Vice President of Programming at Lincoln Center, who in the course of that interview made the extraordinary statement that art, beauty, and truth will no longer suffice. We're still of course waiting to hear what will suffice. I suspect it's politics. However, there's been no sequel to that interview.

I think your remarks, not only about that issue but also about the aesthetic concerns that have governed your own thinking about your painting, do articulate a point of view which is nowadays very far from being the established one in our official, which is to say institutional, cultural life. Nonetheless, it is by no means a lost cause.

You'll be having a retrospective exhibition that opens in April of 1993 at the National Gallery in Washington. I wonder if you'd like to say anything about it. As I understand it, it is not a complete retrospective but a rather more circumscribed selection of your work.

HF: Do you mean thinking of the exhibition in relation to what's going on today?

HK: Well, both in relation to what's going on today and how the actual selection for the exhibit has been made. What has been your own thinking about what should go into that exhibition?

HF: It is, as you said, a retrospective, though not complete, of my graphics covering more than three decades of my prints. It's been curated by Ruth Fine at the National Gallery, who gave it a particular slant. Working with her has been interesting and pleasurable. This slant not only includes an example of the print edition but provides as well a kind of documentation based on Ruth's detective work in my print archives, as to how that final edition came about. In the print world I'm an artist who has enormous archives and experiments which lead up to the final "okay to print" trial proof. For example, I might try scores of printed pieces of paper with a blue substituting for a yellow, or part of the bottom cropped off, or taking part of a lithograph stone and transferring it on to something else; myriad tries. Ruth has built this show around that process. Looking at the archives with her in a warehouse or in my studio, I could trace the logic of the numerous proofs that went into making a print. Many examples of the proofs in the exhibition have my hand additions in crayon, paint, or pastel. Curating the show with Ruth, with her vision, has been most helpful in terms of how I operate in a workshop.

HK: I wonder if we might go back for a moment to our discussion of the fifties. I have a particular memory of the fifties that recalls for me the somewhat less than full-blooded support that abstract painting in New

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York enjoyed from the museums and the other institutions. We tend to think now that The Museum of Modern Art, particularly, was right in there, shoulder to shoulder, with every new innovation. But I remember very vividly the first panel I was ever invited to participate on, chaired by Johnny Myers, at the Artists' Club. Johnny Myers was then your dealer at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery. It was a panel on what was then called the New Figurative Painting, which Johnny Myers's gallery was very much a part of, with Grace Hartigan, Larry Rivers, and others. The panel consisted of Clement Greenberg, Alfred Barr, Frank O'Hara, and myself, with Johnny Myers as moderator, and I was very daunted by the prospect. I was sort of new to the scene, and I said to Johnny Myers that I did not think I had time to prepare an adequate presentation. He said, "Oh, my dear, you don't have to prepare anything but your ideas."

But the reason why that evening was so memorable, quite apart from my own nerves, was the statement that Alfred Barr made that evening. Now Alfred, I should interject, is a man I hold in the highest esteem and in sacred memory, but we've all made mistakes. And Alfred was, I think, enchanted with Larry Rivers's painting of Washington crossing the Delaware, which had just entered the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. I don't think that Alfred quite understood the Rivers painting was a kind of camp play on the famous nineteenth-century American painting of the same subject. That is, he certainly knew it was based on the earlier painting, but I don't think he quite understood the attitude toward the original that the Rivers' painting displayed. Alfred said that evening that he thought that abstract painting was now coming to an end and that the next phase of American painting would be, like the Rivers painting, in the direction of a revival of history painting.

In the fifties, there was quite a lot of that kind of thinking. Almost every other year, there was an announcement, usually in *The New York Times,* saying that abstract art was over and that we were now going to do this, go back to that other thing. Do you want to say something about the atmosphere then, since, after all, that was the atmosphere in which the first decade of your most important work was produced?

HF: Yes, what you're describing was there, the attitude of "figurative painting is in." In part, The Museum of Modern Art might have been the power behind it. The Museum wielded great power, and depending upon whether or not one was in the "Fourteen American Artists" exhibition, one was supposedly sort of "made" or broken by it. If the general sympathy was not with abstract art, it was because people couldn't get an easy handle on it. You are much more left with *yourself,* when confronting an abstract picture and determining whether you like or dislike it. For false

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reasons, it's easier to look at a picture of someone picking up flowers in a garbage can or doing camp – camp is a very good word for it – a camp portrait of a figure, in some form or another. Again, to the hard-core of the abstract avant-garde, this was just another ripple and frill going by. You went about your own business. While infuriating, you couldn't get too disturbed. They could do what they wanted, you could do what you wanted. The more the merrier! I think originally that within the group trying to revive figurative painting (for example, Grace Hartigan, Alfred Leslie, Harry Jackson), there were many who previously had been abstract artists. It seemed as if they turned from abstract to figurative painting almost overnight. It part, it appeared to be a rebellion (as there is now) – directed at Clement Greenberg and those who believed in him – by those who wanted to "fix matters" and set the record straight by going back to the "real" big boys who painted recognizable subject matter. But truth wins out.

This has gone on forever, since the history of art. I'm sure it was true in the *quattrocento:* this hilltown made better pictures than that hilltown! All these attempts eventually fall into place. All we have to do is look at what has hung on the walls of our greatest museums throughout the centuries. Let's see what happens next and hope for a breakthrough.

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JOHN P. DIGGINS

Language, Politics, Leadership

When liberal political philosophy enunciated its founding principles, various thinkers looked to language as the ally of progressive politics. The idea of communication, public debate, and parliamentary discussion provided the basis for the rational reconciliation of issues. Some Enlightenment *philosophes* assumed that language, as the form through which knowledge speaks, could be juxtaposed to power in order to expose its arbitrary, irrational molestations. The power of words to oppose power could be relied upon in a culture that believed language accurately represented reality and that truth could be held, even inalienably possessed, as "self-evident."

Today language has lost its innocence as a transparent medium. Politics itself is no longer guided by belief in objective truth, and government suffers from a lack of leadership, a subject absent in recent years from American scholarship in favor of that of "strong democracy." In American political theory citizen participation has become an end in itself, and democracy rests on the vagaries of language rather than in the clarity of leadership.

Abraham Lincoln once spoke to the American people in the name of the nature of things, and political authority drew its validity from that reference. No more. Today language and politics function without foundations in philosophy or religion. Philosophers and literary theorists have long been telling us that knowledge cannot possess its object, and that behind self-constituted interpretations and rhetorical formations lie little more than interest and power. In modern politics, too, the quest for truth and justice is verbally promised in the name of "change" as candidates go after power, office, and influence. The philosopher informs us that knowledge is power; knowledge is not only the capacity to have effect but also the condition of experiencing representation as exclusion and, hence, domination. It is small wonder there lurks a crisis of representation, whether of inanimate objects that exist to be known or of "marginalized" people demanding to be seen and heard. Indeterminacy reigns everywhere. In politics, no less than in modern thought, it is difficult to determine the ideas behind the words, be they in a text or a speech. With either author or politician, interpretation depends upon the

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response of either reader or voter. Ludwig Wittgenstein once hoped that philosophy would rescue thought from the "bewitchment" of language. Who will rescue politics, the arena in which words also lose significance since their meaning is no longer determined by the objects they refer to but by the emotions they arouse? One hardly looks to a politician to observe a mind compelling its thought to correspond to the ways things are. In a world of representations, the real is wrought by the mind, and the politician's ambition is to say not what is demonstrably true but what is viscerally convincing – a task perhaps best performed by those who lack convictions.

Today, the campaign manager is the political equivalent of the literary deconstructionist. Once it is granted that all is representation, that there is only persuasion without proof, then politics becomes all cunning without conscience. With the political consultant, Madison Avenue meets Machiavelli, who advised that politics has nothing to do with morality except as a veil of appearance, that truth resides in power and therefore the end justifies the means, and that the candidate is not to be but to seem to be whatever the situation calls for. Political victory requires a campaign of evasion, adaptation, compromise ("the art of the possible"), and, above all, accusation, the art of annihilation by aspersion.

Political thinkers from Alexis de Tocqueville to Hannah Arendt believed that politics ought to be concerned more with virtue than victory. To the extent that politics occupies a "public space," Arendt held, justice, virtue, and the public good may be approximated through speech, persuasion, and common action. Tocqueville assumed that a virtuous citizenry might overcome private vice if politics were conducted openly in the public sphere; deceit would be more difficult to hide and selfishness would become "ashamed of itself." American politics has never been as much of a public affair as it is in our era, a strategy of speech performances involving image projection and impression management. Yet one detects no shame in electoral politics and campaigns, which have come to dominate America's political culture at the expense of government – specifically the responsibilities of legislation and administration, as well as of citizen education through reflective dialogue and debate. In recent years it seems that government, defined by Edmund Burke as "a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants," exists solely for politics, "the systematic organization of hatreds" in Henry Adams's view. With the body politic lacking a common will, government splits into its constituent parts, and politicians can no longer rule, not to say lead.

Who is to blame for the squalid state of contemporary politics? Many commentators point the finger at the media, specifically television. There is no doubt that television commercials require huge expenditures, and electronic communication leads to the staging of pseudo-events and to

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sound bites wherein images and facile utterances replace issues and sustained analysis. Yet while television trivializes political discourse and journalistic interrogation can demean political debate, one can hardly assume that modern politics would be more substantial without such coverage. Much of the present indictment was anticipated as early as 1922 by Walter Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion*, where he depicts "the news of the day" as a blur without sequential meaning, in which reporting is bereft of consecutive reasoning and the reader experiences events without comprehending them. Nor can it be assumed that it is television which has made the visual more important than the conceptual. "Men as a whole," wrote Machiavelli, "judge with their eyes rather than with their hands . . . because to see belongs to everyone, to feel to a few." For all the cry about addressing issues, images will continue to determine politics, because we continue to assume that it is possible to accurately judge candidates by how we "see" them. Thus today we have the "Gergenization" of American politics, where someone like David Gergen can go easily from one party to another, serving as a spin doctor to control our view of reality.At the same time, because people do try to listen as well as to see, politics will continue to be determined by language as well as by vision. Does language distort politics and frustrate leadership? The question scarcely troubles some political strategists and literary theorists, who share the conviction that language has no obligation to refer to anything in the real world of objects and actions. Campaign politics traffics mainly in words, but words as sounds signifying nothing specific lose their credibility, as Falstaff told his Elizabethan audience:

> Honor pricks me on. Yes, but how if honor pricks me off when I come on? How then? Can honor set a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honor hath no skill in surgery then? No. What is honor? A word. What is that word honor? Air. A trim reckoning!

Once language is seen as so much air and political speech as simply a performance, people can hardly be expected to believe in words any more. Even when the strategist combines the visual with the audible ("Read my lips!"), politics loses its capacity to make truth felt.

Can leadership restore that capacity and make words ring true? "The corruption of man," wrote Ralph W. Emerson, "is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, and praise, words are perverted to stand for things which are not." The prevailing "secondary desire" to maintain

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slavery, Lincoln pointed out, led plantation owners to make liberty stand for what it is not: the right to possess and dominate others. Lincoln not only showed how the politics of slavery perverted the language of politics; he even anticipated contemporary deconstructionists in showing that what is concealed and denied in a text may be more telling than its manifest contents. The Constitution, Lincoln instructed,

> alludes to slavery three times without mentioning it once! The language used becomes ambiguous, roundabout, and mystical. They speak of the "immigration of persons," and mean the importation of slaves, but do not say so. In establishing a basis of representation they say "all other persons," when they mean to say slaves – why did they not use the shortest phrase? In providing for the return of fugitives they say "persons held to service or labor." If they had said slaves it would have been plainer, and less liable to misconstruction. Why didn't they do it?

Lincoln did not have to take courses in Yale University's English Department to learn that forbidden subjects are repressed from discourse. But Lincoln's mode of reasoning, based upon the defining properties of statements in which an idea remains identical in meaning with the nature of the idea it refers to, is out of fashion in much of the intellectual world today. Deconstructionists have opened our eyes to language as ironic and duplicitous, a tissue of textuality where meaning is stretched and suspended on metaphors before it sinks under the weight of its own incoherences and rhetorical strategies. Critical theorists have interrogated language, either to provide a critique of domination in order to empower the powerless unrepresented in language and politics, or to provide a critique of freedom in order to demonstrate how much constraint actually governs social relations.

Is it possible for language to serve politics instead of subverting it, and can language alone alter the way we see things? On both these questions, the philosopher Richard Rorty is much more affirmative and optimistic than the critical theorists and poststructuralists. His neo-pragmatism extends beyond the older Deweyite version by shifting from scientific experimentation to literary representation. Philosophy as a language activity aims not to prove what one knows by analysis and explanation but to justify what one says by rhetorical persuasion. Recognizing the ironic nature of language, whereby "anything can be made to look good or bad by being redistributed," Rorty would make us aware that the human condition is a result of social and historical circumstances, a matter of contingency rather than the necessity of any essential human nature or

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national character. The conviction that language has the capacity to alter the way things are seen follows from the assumption that reality is a construction of language. But may not reality defy its representations? For it may be that there is after all an authentic spectacle of power and evil that does not rest on contingency alone. Such a spectacle might instead defy the philosopher who assumes that reality, known only as it is interpreted, can be reinterpreted to suit political purposes. Experimenting with vocabularies can do little to change determinate phenomena that exist independently of discourse. Language fixation, Edmund Burke observed, is the conceit of the thinker who will not admit that the wicked inventiveness of power eludes its passing representations:

> You might change the names. The things in some shape remain the same. A certain quantum of power must always exist in the community, in some hands, and under some appellation. Wise men will apply their remedies to vices, not to names: to the causes of evil which are permanent, not to the occasional organs by which they act, and the transitory modes in which they appear. Otherwise you will be wise historically, a fool in practice. Seldom have two ages the same fashion in their pretexts and same modes of mischief. Wickedness is a little more inventive. Whilst you are discussing fashion, the fashion is gone by. The very same vice assumes a new body. The spirit transmigrates; and, far from losing its principle of life by the change of its appearance, it is renovated in its new organs with the fresh vigour of a juvenile activity. It walks abroad; it continues its ravages; whilst you are gibbeting the carcass, or demolishing the tomb. You are terrifying yourself with ghosts and apparitions, while your house is the haunt of robbers. It is thus with all those, who attending only to the shell and husk of history, think they are waging war with intolerance, pride, and cruelty, whilst, under the colour of abhoring the ill principles of antiquated parties, they are authorizing and feeding the same odious vice in different factions, and perhaps in worse.

Today many intellectuals, especially academics under the spell of "the linguistic turn," see themselves, as writers and interpreters, waging war against intolerance and injustice. To Burke politics depended more on leadership than on language, and government was to aspire to the public good instead of pandering to interest groups in response to democratic pressures. The American Republic began with such a noble vision, until the language of democracy asserted itself as an opposition and, as a result, distorted the reality of politics in American history.

In the 1780s, when the framers were drafting the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton hoped that the "love of fame" would induce the

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wealthy and wisest elements to serve in government. The desire for reputation would insure honest and responsible conduct, for honor "is the ruling passion of the noblest of minds." A century later, in the age of cynicism that characterized the politics of the post-Civil War era, the tycoon Jim Fisk, having been caught bribing a legislature, openly boasted: "Nothing is lost save honor!" In the Gilded Age, the ruling passions of the noblest minds were nowhere to be found. A presidency that extended from George Washington to General Grant was, quipped Henry Adams, evidence enough to upset Darwin's theory of evolutionary progress.

It had not started out that way. The framers of the Constitution believed that the corruption of politics by wealth, which later came to characterize post-Civil War America, could be prevented by placing a series of obstacles in its path: rotation in office, frequent elections, and indirect representation to "refine and enlarge" the clamor coming from the larger society. The framers also recognized that most men would satisfy their craving for reputation by pursuing wealth. But Hamilton assumed that the "rich, well-born, and able" would be sufficiently secure socially to devote their energies to government and the public good as enlightened administrators. John Adams believed that elites could be seduced away from the marketplace and induced to enjoy the distinction of serving in the Senate, where their corrupting temptations could be kept under surveillance while their needed talents could be exploited. But such expectation could not rid the framers of suspicion. It was "the Part of a great Politician," wrote Adams, "to make the Character of his People, to extinguish among them the Follies and Vices that he sees, and to create in them the Virtues and Abilities which he sees wanting. I wish I was sure that America has one such Politician but I fear she has not."

Hamilton would also admit that "stern virtue is the growth of few soils." To compensate for the lack of civic virtue in human nature, the framers sought to perfect the "composition" and "structure" of the new political system, on the assumption that out of the "machinery of government" would derive a good whole despite its defective parts. Within the structural apparatus of "the well-ordered Constitution," the framers would synthesize the sense of the people with the interests of the nation. The "Art of Government" called for rational deliberation; the exercise of the faculty of judgment; prudent legislation that distinguished good laws from bad ones; the relation of means to ends and knowledge to justice,;and possession of the wisdom to provide for future contingencies and the courage to resist pressures of the moment.

No sooner had this noble dream of governance been articulated than it was challenged by the anti-Federalists. The opponents of the newly proposed Constitution regarded it as encumbered with mechanisms of domination and too remote from local control. A decade later, the

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Virginia Republicans drove the Northern Federalists from office, and here begins one of the most curious ideological turns in American history. A new Jeffersonian ideology would arise to rule in the name of democracy; a movement led by an aristocrat, slaveholder, and cultural elitist. But Thomas Jefferson, who himself believed in the leadership of a "natural aristocracy" based on talent and virtue, struck a chord that crossed class lines. He ran not for but against government.

Henceforth in American history, both conservatives and radicals, the wealthy and the workers, would invoke a populist appeal to the people at the expense of government, which the Federalists had identified as the last remnant of virtue in an emergent commercial society. Adams and Hamilton had stood for control, balance, surveillance, and public responsibility; the Jeffersonian ethos promised freedom, democracy, and individual opportunity. With the "pursuit of happiness" elevated to a moral standard, good government became that which benefited the governed the most by governing least. No longer would government be guided by knowledge of the public good, nor would theory and political philosophy have any significant role in American history. Political language itself would no longer provide a guide to political conduct. Using the language of liberty, the Jeffersonians ran against government as a power-machine established by Hamilton for the protection of the propertied classes. The Jeffersonians stood morally tall as they called for reducing the debt and limiting the scope of national power. The Republicans believed, wrote Henry Adams, "government must be ruled by principle, to which the Federalist answered, government must be ruled by circumstances."

Once in office, however, the Jeffersonians betrayed their principles as they continued Hamilton's banking programs, purchased the Louisiana territory, imposed tariffs and embargoes and other measures that meant the once-small agrarian Republic would be an expanding, commercial empire. That the Jeffersonians could simply out-federalize the Federalists – as two centuries later, the Republicans out-democratized the Democrats by running against government and then expanding it – indicated that in American history no party needed to stand on principles, that theory ceased to guide practice, and that rhetoric would rationalize reality as politicians and their constituents pursued interest and power in the name of rights and liberty.

It was not the case that politics flexibly adapted to circumstance while adhering to principle; rather, principles and ideals disappeared from political life and lingered in the realm of language. To the post-structuralist, who remains skeptical of the reality of the world beyond language, a rendezvous with rhetoric is all that is left to analyze. Lincoln, of course, analyzed the language and reasoning of slave apologists to illustrate what they excluded and refused to acknowledge. Yet he scrutinized language as

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made up of conceptual propositions whose meanings depended upon the defining nature of ideas themselves – not as a playboard of signifiers. To him it was the world beyond language that mattered, not the Declaration of Independence as a "metanarrative" but the "spirit of '76" and the "blood sacrifices" the document entailed.

Curiously, the subject of leadership seems to have been discredited in American scholarship with the arrival of the sixties generation in academe. Older scholars like James MacGregor Burns and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. had drawn from their studies of FDR and the New Deal lessons about the importance of leadership to a democracy. But Benjamin Barber, Director of the Walt Whitman Center for the Study of Democracy at Rutgers University, charges that older New Deal liberals have mistaken the value of leadership for the virtue of citizenship, thereby reducing people to "passive observers whose main public activity is applause." Enamored of the sixties mystique of participatory democracy, Barber regards leadership as elitist and star-gazing, when politics should be egalitarian and actively self-governing. Barber's essay, "Neither Leaders nor Followers: Citizenship under Strong Democracy," is prefaced by two seductive aphorisms: "Strong leaders make a weak people" (Emile Zapata) and "Some say 'pity the country that has no heroes'; I say 'pity the country that needs heroes'" (Bertolt Brecht).

"Political philosophy," Georges Sorel observed, "becomes muddled whenever it is concerned with democracy." The muddle remains as long as we accept as a self-sufficient proposition such assumptions about democracy. Does "strong democracy" guarantee strong people simply because they have been redescribed as virtuous citizens? Tocqueville observed that "the courtier spirit" was more widespread in democratic America than in monarchist Europe, rendering potential citizens servile and conformist. Emerson and Thoreau doubted that political democracy nurtures a strong sense of self; instead, it brings on spiritual alienation which succumbs to material acquisition. Other observers have viewed democracy as encouraging herd-instincts, thereby thwarting the development of aristocratic spirit and nobility of the soul (Nietzsche); issuing in mass standardization, routine monotony, and complacent mediocrity (Ortega y Gasset); rendering the politician prisoner of the populace (Burke); encouraging pride, group egotism, and obliviousness to the plight of others (Niebuhr), to the point that democratic masses are incapable of recognizing their sinful nature (Lincoln).

For all its complaints against commercial society, the sixties generation scarcely has seen that contemporary democracy itself, based on the whims of popular preference, is a matter of fashion on the part of voters and packaging on the part of candidates. With campaign strategists selling their candidates, democracy takes on the features of a commodity transaction,

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and politics becomes indistinguishable from economics, a matter of business management and capital investment (*Betrieb,* as Weber put it after his trip to America). Spengler noted, "Intellect reaches the throne only when money puts it there. Democracy is the completed equating of money with political power." Democracy rests on unanimity of the moment, and thus to "leave a decision to the majority is like leaving it to chance" (Santayana). Democracy without leadership drifts, flounders, muddles through (Lippmann), suspects the wisest and the worthiest (Bryce), and leaves America vulnerable to the worst: "The true theatre of a demagogue is a democracy" (James F. Cooper).

To raise doubts about democracy by no means implies that other political regimes are more desirable. One can be a democrat and be skeptical of democracy, particularly if some of the political ideals one most values cannot be regarded as products of American democracy. Such staunch democratics as Whitman and Dewey would have us believe that freedom and justice arise as the masses enter history to replace authority and hierarchy. In America, the democratic masses entered history by moving into the West and staking claim to land as theirs by rights that made a mockery of the customs of others. Perhaps schoolchildren ought not to be told what Andrew Jackson did to the Indians. But political philosophers should recognize that it was the Democratic party, and not the Whigs, which prevented the slavery issue from being brought up in Congress. If we are to "read" democracy the way many literary critics advise us to read texts, we may have to face what the wonderful masses were willing to leave out of their own lives. Democracy is supposed to be inclusive and all-embracing. But in the nineteenth century American workers, with the exception of the Knights of Labor, deliberately excluded blacks, Asians, and other immigrant groups. In our time, women, ethnic groups, and preferential minorities find both protection and opportunity through a judicial system in a rights-based political culture that often stands against the sentiments of democratic majorities. One is tempted to say that the thesis of strong democracy is a "text" that constructed itself by its exclusions.

For all their preoccupation with the subjection of power in contemporary America to "hegemonic domination," sixties theorists treat democracy as though power disappears when people see themselves as citizens and act accordingly. But politics cannot escape the reality of power in a democratic culture where there no longer remains any appeal to authority. The framers, realizing that sovereign authority had been destroyed by being dispersed in the Constitution, knew that future politics meant conflict and struggle, and thus they looked to leaders who would bear responsibility rather than delegate it. In democratic politics,

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Lincoln saw some of the tensions that Weber would later analyze in his famous "Politics as a Vocation," especially the conflicts between intention and outcome, between duty to conscience and responsibility for consequences, between integrity and success. In Weber and Lincoln, the ethically anguished politician deserves to lead almost as a tragic hero.

Today in American politics, one finds neither tragedy nor heroism. Curiously, the right and the left think almost alike in their dismissal of leadership. Conservatives assume that what stands in the way of the good society of free individuals is government itself, with its controls and supposedly crippling regulations. Radicals assume that what stands in the way of self-realized individuals are the distortions of the media, pollsters asking the wrong questions, and the power of corporate capitalism to influence and coopt. Conservatives assume that if complete, unregulated freedom prevails, money will "trickle down" from the virtuous market; radicals assume that if corporate wealth can be eliminated, morality will flow up from the virtuous masses. Neither want to consider the possibility that the paralysis of politics today may be the result of popular democracy itself.

Although the right and the left are both susceptible to the temptation of the possibility that a charismatic figure could mean electoral success, each share a common disregard for leadership. Traditionally, conservatives have distrusted a dynamic president as not only threatening to property but also to the old Whig notion that executive authority must be subordinated to the legislative branch. Radicals, although not immune to hero-worship, regard leadership as inherently elitist. Both assume that politics is not an autonomous activity but that it will, given the proper environment, yield to the larger forces of the market or of democracy itself, neither of which requires direction or regulation. The mystique of the spontaneous free market and its "invisible hand" is familiar enough, but a similar mystique of "participatory democracy" promises a Woodstock nation where no one lies and no one leads.

Who should lead? The question troubles students of American politics. A passage from the *Federalist* reads as though the American people were left without any guidance on the subject. When the anti-Federalists asked why intelligent leadership couldn't mediate the class of interest and render it subservient to the public good, Madison replied: "Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm." Yet, as Harvey Mansfield and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. have pointed out, Hamilton looked to the executive office for enlightened statesmanship. Both Mansfield and Schlesinger are pleased to note that the New Deal and the "Reagan Revolution" had their origins in the Executive branch. Hamilton informed Americans that they must reject the idea that "a vigorous executive is inconsistent with the genius of republican government." Here Hamilton tried to challenge

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the long-honored assumption in classical republicanism that the legislative branch must be supreme to check monarchial tendencies. Yet Hamilton does not specify what role the president is to perform other than to assure that the laws are well executed and administered.

For a theory of presidential leadership, one must turn to John Adams's three volume *Defense* of America's new state constitutions. Unlike Jefferson, who believed that once government diminishes its domain, social harmony develops, Adams saw social conflict as inevitable, a reflection of sinful human nature. In Adams's analysis, even Machiavelli emerges as a utopian in his assumption that appeals to civic virtue will overcome factional rivalry. Adams looked to the executive to mediate class conflict. Like the *Federalist* authors, he insisted that without controls classes will "vex and oppress" one another. Rather than defer to the superior classes, the founders, suspicious of a corrupt and idle aristocracy, believed the powerless must be protected from exploitation. In the Senate, Adams would isolate elites, with their "avarice and ardent ambition" as well as superior abilities, so that simpler representatives in the House would not be "eaten alive," as aristocracies would "swallow up" their opponents. The first duty of political leadership was to mitigate class predation. Even Hamilton, more than Jefferson, distrusted the "spirit of enterprise" as insufficiently prudent to serve the public good unless disciplined and directed by government. Capitalism may generate money but commerce corrupts morals. TR denounced the "malefactors of wealth," FDR chastized America's "resplendent economic autocracy," and Lincoln placed "the man before the dollars." None of these presidents believed that the market alone would "supply" or democracy itself deliver what American needed most – leadership.

Today, the two ideas being advanced in democratic theory neglect leadership in order to exhort citizen participation or experiment with literary representation. Collective involvement by "strong" citizens and redescriptive narration by Paris-struck scholars seem to exhaust the possibilities of politics. Is democratic leadership a contradiction? It should be remembered that Whitman extolled Lincoln for giving us a nobility born of democracy, and he sensed that with the assassination the sky darkened over the Republic ("O powerful western fallen star!"). "It is natural to believe in great men," wrote Emerson, who called them not heroes but "representatives," exceptional writers and political figures, even the superior "genius," whose achievements are recognized not because they surpass but rather because they reflect and incarnate human inspiration. "A great man," advised Santayana, "need not be virtuous, nor his opinions right, but he must have a firm mind, a distinctive, luminous character; if he is to dominate things, something must be dominant in him. We feel

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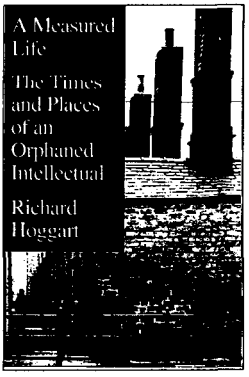
him to be great in that he clarifies and brings to expression something which was potential in the rest of us, but which with our burden of flesh and circumstance was too torpid to utter."

Santayana admired William James: "He belonged to the left, which, as they say in Spain, is the side of the heart, as the right is that of the liver." In his essays, "Great Men and Their Environment" and "The Importance of Individuals," James offered the most telling defense of the aristocratic idea of democracy. In choosing our leaders, the philosopher instructed, "each of us may best fortify what creative energy may lie in his soul." In asking for leadership, in looking to clarity, responsibility, and even inspiring moments of greatness, the citizen seeks a politics that touches the soul.



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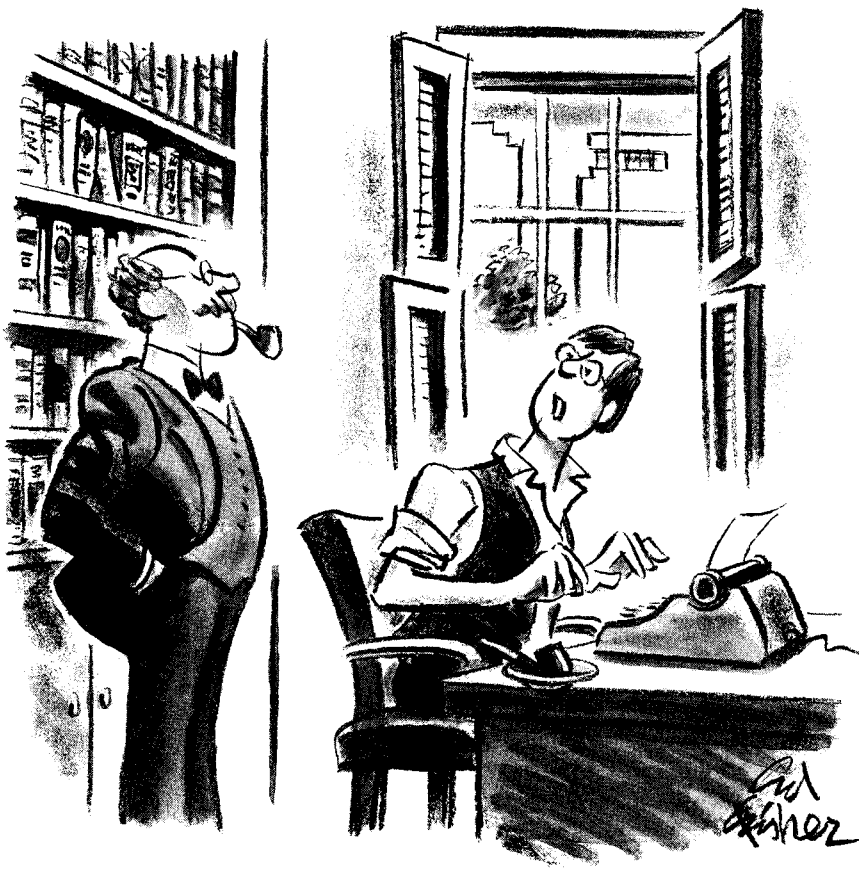

"That may be, Birkhoff. But even in 'a new Alexandrine Age' scholars must publish!"

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EUGENE GOODHEART

From Culture to Ideology

I harbor a suspicion that "postmodern" is a vacuous term, but at times I find myself unable to resist using it to describe what seems to me a more or less unique condition of the contemporary scene. If I had to describe the status of culture (or the idea of culture) in the postmodern phase, I would say that it has come to be virtually identified with a word to which in spirit it was opposed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: that word is ideology. Some anthropologists and literary critics speak of the ideology of a people, meaning what others would characterize as its culture. According to Terry Eagleton:

> Ideology, or culture, denote[s] the whole complex of signifying practices and symbolic processes in a particular society; it . . . allude[s] to the way individuals "lived" their social practices rather than to those practices themselves, which would be the preserve of politics, economics, kinship theory and so on.

He goes on to distinguish this view, which he values, from the more limited "sense of 'culture' which confines itself to artistic and intellectual work of agreed value etcetera."

Eagleton is availing himself of a familiar anthropological conception, shared, for instance, by T. S. Eliot who in contrast to Matthew Arnold envisaged culture as inclusive of "all the characteristic activities of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar." Eagleton's Marxizing contribution is to place this valuable extension of culture under the aegis of ideology with its inevitable associations with false consciousness. To be sure, ideology has other meanings as well, but its definition as false consciousness strongly persists, and it has a deflationary effect on the idea of culture, not to be found in Eliot or for that matter in Eagleton's mentor Raymond Williams.

The convergence of culture and ideology represents a reversal of perspective. In the nineteenth century culture came into being as an optic

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through which the mechanical degradation of human life was seen and judged. In arrogating to itself the spiritual authority of failing religious dogma, culture (I am speaking of it as a character or personality) claimed or sought to be disinterested, free of the contaminations of the social and political practices it scrutinized. It drew its inspiration from idealizations of the preindustrial past: the medievalism of Carlyle, Ruskin, George Eliot, and Morris, the Hellenism of Arnold, and the Renaissance of Pater. Culture represented a continuity with the past that modern life seemed determined to destroy. The advocates of culture understood that the past was not simply to be identified with their figuring of it. They strove to disengage values that were at best imperfectly realized in the past in order to remake the present.

The tables have been turned. Modern thought (Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud come to mind) tends to suspect all idealistic critiques of society. Its aim is to demystify pretensions to transcendence; it tries to subvert distinctions between culture and society, art and politics that imply the possibility of transcendence. Social and political categories have become totalizing. What has virtually disappeared is the sense of culture or art as a force resistant to ideology. The task of the ideology critic is to expose the ways in which cultural expressions reflect, or more interestingly, conceal class and by extension race and gender interests.

I should remark here that in speaking of a modern tendency and in invoking historical figures like Marx and Freud, I have illustrated my uneasiness about postmodernism as an explanatory category. The postmodern may be no more than the exacerbation of the modern tendencies that precede it.

The critique of ideology depends upon one of the most fundamental distinctions in human thought, the distinction between appearance and reality. It is rooted in common experience, which tells us not to put too much trust in appearances. It is also an assumption of modern science, which represents a reality invisible to the senses. The distrust of appearances may serve a transcendental view of experience in which material reality (social, political, economic) is seen as a distorted shadow of the real. The archetypal instance of this kind of reasoning is to be found in the Socratic theory of ideal forms. Such reasoning would seem the reverse of ideological reduction, but it shares with ideology critique a sense of alienation from phenomenal reality. As Paul Ricoeur remarks, "The hermeneutics of suspicion [of which ideology critique is an example] enters into the dialectical pattern with phenomenology, and phenomenology must stand humiliated in the confrontation."

For the ideology critic, the benign appearances of the established order in its political and cultural expressions are not to be trusted, because they mask a pervasive reality of domination, for instance, by presenting

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particular interests under the aspect of objectivity or universality. Eagleton puts it bluntly: "We are generally right to suspect that appeals to see the object as it really is can be decoded as invitations to see it as our rulers do." In the same spirit, John B. Thompson defines the study of ideology as the examination of "the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination." Cultural texts, because of their seductive aesthetic power, may turn out, from this perspective, to be the worst offenders. One need not assume that the text or its author engages in conscious deceit, for the text may not know itself. The *raison d'etre* of ideology critique is to liberate the truth of the text from its mystifications.

Ideology critique would not have its current authority if it did not appear to express a general desire for truth and justice, for its ostensible target is the oppressor-mystifier. But should we accept the claim of ideological criticism at face value? Kenneth Burke raised the issue years ago in a discussion of demystification: "While leading you to watch his act of destruction at one point, the 'unmasker' is always furtively building at another point, and by his prestidigitation, he can forestall observation of his own moves." Why should the demystifier be exempt from suspicion of the motives and implications of his own activity? Or to put the case in the idiom of the hermeneutics of suspicion: why should suspicion itself be exempt from scrutiny, why should it be accepted as a necessary mark of critical sophistication? The habit of suspicion *when it becomes systematic and totalizing* tends to produce an insensitivity to "higher" values, an inclination to associate truth with a cynical view of motive. The critic feels no obligation to accept the text in its own terms. If objectivity is impossible, there is a question of whether "in its own terms" has any meaning. The result is that the critic dominates and transforms the text to his own understanding of the truth.

Ideology critique derives from the Enlightenment, but it represents a development of its dogmatic side. Obsessed with concealment, it claims to expose the world to the light of reason, but its real motive is total mastery of the world. Preoccupied with power and its masks, ideology critique participates in the very discourse it apparently repudiates. In wanting to expose mystification everywhere, the critic declares its omnipresence by fiat. He makes it omnipresent by simply asserting that it is everywhere. "We are at a time," Fredric Jameson observes without fear of contradiction, "when we have *minimally* agreed that *everything* is ideology, or better still, that there is nothing outside of ideology" [my emphasis]. Ideology critics usually insist on the constructed "nature" of our conceptual categories, but they assume without reflection that ideology is a given. They make nothing of the fact that the concept is a recent invention with a history of unstable meaning. It is of course true that a concept

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of recent invention may prove to illuminate experience prior to its invention. The present *may* understand the past as the past does not understand itself. But if one insists on an historical perspective, then a concept as unstable in its meanings as ideology should not be exempt from the critical caution one exercises in treating all concepts. If ideology can multiply its meanings, often in contradictory fashion, there is no reason not to suspect or resist its usage when it becomes vague or confusing or misleading.

Ideology holds a deep attraction for its critics. In declaring ideology to be omnipresent, the critic lays claim to a hidden truth visible only to the discerning eye of the demystifier. Resistance to the demystified truth is regarded as a sign of the hold of mystification upon the resister. Like deconstruction, ideology critique becomes an endless task. The bringing of the hidden truth to the surface does not end ideology, because it is recurrent and pervasive; more often than not, the object or subject refuses to acknowledge the demystification. Real debate or dialogue becomes impossible, because the ground of difference between the demystifier and his antagonist is not the problematic nature of truth but the difference between truth and illusion. The person who claims to *know* the truth and is certain that others with an opposing view are the captives of illusion is a potential despot. The truth of ideology critics is not that they wish to rid the world of the concealed motive, the secret they have discovered. Their possession of the secret becomes the basis of solidarity. Ideology, even as an object of criticism, is a way of bonding in a post-Enlightenment world in which traditional communities have lost their authority. For the critic, ideology becomes the community in which he or she lives. It should not be surprising then that Fredric Jameson seems to exhibit no dismay when he declares that everything is ideology.

Reading a text becomes an exercise in surveillance and discipline. The text is always under suspicion for motives it fails to disclose. Its declarations can never be taken or accepted on their own terms. If the text were a living person, it would experience violation. Certainly, living authors may experience the violation of their texts in a critic's egoistic indifference to their intentions. Ideology critique is a species of reader-centered criticism in which the text is not viewed as the work of an author with a life of its own, but rather as an object for appropriation by the reader. Roland Barthes, who in one of his many roles performed the role of ideology critic, put the case for the reader with stunning candor:

> Thus begins at the heart of the critical work the dialogue of two histories and two subjectivities, the author's and the critic's. But this dialogue is egoistically shifted toward the present: criticism is not an

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> homage to the truth of the past or to the truth of "others" – it is a construction of the intelligibility of our own time.

In Barthes's formulation, the reader reveals himself as an exemplification of his historical moment, "the intelligibility of his time." The critic does not in a sense make any discoveries, for he brings to a text or to a cultural situation an ideological agenda, such as the current postcolonial agenda that says all the evils of the modern world spring from imperialism or colonialism. The scrutiny of a text becomes an exercise in revealing conscious or unconscious attitudes of colonialism.

Of course, evils have sprung from colonialism, which has often masked its aims under a benign guise of universalism. Isn't it therefore the legitimate business of ideology critique to uncover the reality under the guise? Certainly one can find many instances of an imperializing universality that requires the kind of severity the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe exercises in his essay, "Colonialist Criticism." In it, for instance, he cites a discussion of African fiction by a British critic in which the critic, in an act of apparent generosity, praises a novel for its universality:

> That it is set in Africa appears to be accidental, for, except for a few comments at the beginning, Peter's story might just as easily have taken place in the southern regions of France or Italy. If a few names of characters and places were changed, one could indeed feel that this was an American novel. In short, Peter's story is universal.

Achebe elicits the cultural chauvinism behind this judgment in the British critic's disarmingly candid admission:

> Or am I deluding myself in considering the *universal*? Maybe what I really mean is that *The Second Round* is to a great degree Western and therefore scarcely African at all.

Instances of this kind, however, do not warrant the conclusion that all universalizing discourse masks a particular interest. As Tzvetan Todorov remarks, other ideologies such as Christianity, relativism, racism, and nationalism have been used as justifications for colonialism. There is no reason to believe that universalism is intrinsically colonialist: "La politique coloniale est prête a faire feu de tout bois."

What is at stake in the attack on universalism is the view that it is a mask for Eurocentrism and that Europe or the West is in its essence colonialist. This view has recently been scrutinized by Leszek Kolakowski

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in his essay, "Looking for the Barbarians: The Illusions of Cultural Universalism." Kolakowski condemns the destructive aspects of the colonialist legacy of the West, but he regards the reduction of the European experience to imperialism and racism as caricature. He offers a compelling alternative vision of European identity:

> We affirm our belonging to European culture by our ability to view ourselves at a distance, critically, through the eyes of others; by the fact that we value tolerance in public life and skepticism in our intellectual work, and recognize the need to confront, in both the scientific and legal spheres, as many opinions as possible; in short, by leaving the field of uncertainty open. And while we concede all this, we also maintain, tacitly or explicitly, that a culture capable of expressing these ideas in a vigorous way, defending them, and introducing them, however imperfectly, into its life, is a superior culture. If we behave fanatically, if we protect our exclusivity to the extent that we will not consider other arguments, if we are incapable of self-questioning, then we think we are behaving barbarically; consequently we must also consider barbaric the fanatics of other traditions, locked, like us, into their own exclusivity. One cannot be skeptical to the extent of failing to notice the difference between skepticism and fanaticism; that would be tantamount to being skeptical to the extent of no longer being skeptical.

Kolakowski goes on to note a paradox in the values he is affirming: the values of openness, skepticism and self-criticism have undermined European cultural self-confidence. He speaks of the European's "enfeebled will toward self-affirmation." Indeed, it is this capacity for self-questioning that may lead to a guilt-ridden rejection of European cultural achievement as an expression of European hegemony.

Kolakowski's attitude toward cultural universalism is admirably ambiguous (not ambivalent): "My own claims are thus instances of inconsistent skepticism and inconsistent universalism: skepticism and universalism, in other words, of a kind that avoid . . . paradox by remaining within certain limits, beyond which the difference between themselves and barbarity becomes blurred." What he wishes to see propagated are not European values and achievements per se, but those values which he believes Europe has in its best Enlightenment traditions nurtured in the interest of fostering diversity. Kolakowski's insistence on the universality of certain European cultural values does not reflect a desire for domination, but rather an *un*fanatical and *un*exclusive hospitality toward other cultures.

The critique of colonialism should awaken the European conscience to an awareness of the human destructiveness of conquest; it should be a

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spur to liquidating the legacy of injustice still experienced by conquered peoples; and it ought to constitute a warning against future conquest. However, it cannot and should not undo the cultural consequences of the conquest. Colonialism is *not* the essence of modern European civilization in the sense that the Holocaust is the essence of Nazism. To argue the contrary is to assert that Europe is a nihilism. Post-conquest Europe produced a civilization that contains within itself the potential for the negation of colonialism and for cultural diversity. What is at stake is not simply a defense of Europe but also a defense of the very values that presumably inspire the critique of colonialism. This I believe is the implicit logic of Kolakowski's affirmation of European identity.

The limits that Kolakowski imposes on skepticism is an implicit rebuke to its radical version that declares objective knowledge to be impossible, since we are all supposed to be locked inside our perspectives. The consequence of such a view is either the arrogance of solipsism or the confession of defeat: epistemological or ethical authority is impossible. There is an affinity between the ideology critic and the radical skeptic. What they share is a dogmatic conviction of their possession of truth (in the case of the ideology critic) and of the impossibility of truth (in the case of the radical skeptic). In both cases dialogue is impossible, because what is known or cannot be known has been resolved beforehand.

Kolakowski's skepticism is an epistemology of democracy. Though it does not preclude the possibility that a person or institution may possess the truth, it resists all dogmatic claims to absolute truth. If power justifies itself in the name of truth, it should never presume to be unchallengeable. Kolakowski's limited skepticism, which allows for the possibility of truth, contrasts with the radical skepticism that lacks the resources to resist raw power, since it does not have in its intellectual or moral arsenal justifications for or against power and its particular manifestations. Truth and moral claims that might justify power or that might argue against it dissolve in the acid of radical skepticism. Kolakowski's inconsistent universalism avoids the twin pitfalls of ideological dogmatism and radical skepticism.

But isn't there an ideology of openness with its own mystifications? Isn't the open system proposed by Kolakowski constrained by the scientific-rational criteria that reflect what Max Weber has called Occidental rationality? Even if one answers in the affirmative as one must, the difference between an open system and a closed one is that the closed system, when challenged, will correct itself in such a way as to preserve its fundamental premises (for example, that the history of all societies, present and previously existing, is a history of class conflict), whereas the open system will allow for self-correction that may entail the revision of fun-

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damental premises. Of course, it is true that the ground rules allowing for self-correction are not open to challenge; if they were, there would be the risk of destroying openness itself.

Openness evokes the idea of freedom, which is inimical to closed systems driven by necessity. Why, we may ask, are the metaphysicians of ideology so enamored of "necessity"? Why do they focus almost exclusively on the constraints, the determinations of existence? How do they reconcile their interest in "liberation" with their theory of necessity? A Marxist might argue that necessity authorizes the revolutionary will to transform the world. But such a view, I believe, reverses cause and effect. The will is not the agent of necessity: necessity is the agent of will, and necessity reveals the character of the will as dominating and despotic. The necessitarian says in effect: there are no alternatives to what I desire.

The version of universalism that Kolakowski proposes may not answer to critics who subscribe to what I call the sacrosanctity of difference. From this perspective, no European-generated knowledge, however much it tries to be open, can be faithful to the reality of the colonialized Other, simply because of an asymmetry in power between the languages of dominant and subordinate cultures. (This is the formulation of Talal Asad.) The knowledge of a subordinate culture produced by a dominant culture is bound to be a reconstruction according to the alien categories of the dominant one. Power and its interests necessarily distort understanding. The claim is that the mind of a culture and the particular minds that constitute it are absolutely constrained by interests that disable the capacity for authentic knowledge. Such a claim renders impossible, on the one hand, discriminations among persons that inhabit any culture, and on the other, the commonalities that exist among cultures.

Tzvetan Todorov provides an alternative view of the relationship between ideology and knowledge in his book, *The Conquest of America*. His subject is the conquistador mentality in its variety. Columbus is distinguished from Cortès, Cortès from Las Casas, Duran from Sahagun. Todorov is careful to specify the ways in which European Christian ideology determined Columbus's experience and understanding of the New World. He contends that Columbus was incapable of seeing or understanding the other apart from the beliefs that he brought with him from Europe. "He is not concerned to understand more fully the words of those who speak to him, for he knows in advance that he will encounter Cyclopes, men with tails, and Amazons." In projecting his own values onto the Indians Columbus divinizes or demonizes them, but "he does not grant the Indians the right to have their own will . . . he judges them, in short, as living objects."

In contrast, Cortès *does* have the capacity for understanding the other,

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despite or perhaps because of his European Christian formation. This capacity and the lack of it in Montezuma, may explain in large part the Spaniard's victory in the face of the numerically superior forces of the Aztecs. Ideology here does not prevent knowledge of the other; it may even become a catalyst of knowledge, though to be sure, knowledge for Cortès leads not to compassionate understanding but to conquest and destruction. The Dominican Diego Duran, who came to live in Mexico in the 1540s, is an even more impressive example of a successful "desire to know" the Indians from the inside. Though his "purpose was and is that of warning our priests of the mysteries and idolatrous practices of these people, so that they may be aware of and wakeful for some survivals of ancient heathen beliefs that might still linger," Todorov shows that "Duran's success [both as student of Aztec customs and as penetrating critic of Spanish behavior] is incontestable." Duran is an example of cultural hybridization, of the capacity to be both inside and outside two cultures. Todorov is careful to specify the powerful Christian influences on Duran's life and work, but they never constitute the total explanation. He distinguishes between knowledge and compassion. One may know another in order to appreciate and cherish the life of the other, but one may also know in order to conquer and destroy.

Todorov's anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist credentials are beyond dispute. As a Bulgarian exile from Soviet imperalism, he is precociously sensitive to imperialism of all kinds. As he says in the epilogue: "For Cortès, the conquest of knowledge leads to the conquest of power. I take the conquest of knowledge from his example, even if I do so in order to resist power." He considers it frivolous to "merely condemn the wicked conquistadors and regret the noble Indians." Such *Manichean* oppositions (my word, not Todorov's) prevent one from acknowledging the "occasional superiority" of European culture (for instance, in its developing knowledge of the other, which is a necessary condition for preventing future conquests of power). Todorov's study, of which I have given the merest sketch, is a persuasive argument against an ideological determinism which effectively subverts the claim of knowledge.

In offering Kolakowski's inconsistent universalism as an alternative to the ideological mode of thought, I am aware of the satisfactions it cannot presently provide. It does not make a culture or a society. The problem, one might say the pathos, of universality lies not in its deceptive masking of particular interests but rather in its incapacity to keep its promise of solidarity. It does not provide the experience of solidarity one enjoys in groups. Universalism is an abstraction, a theory, without the institutions, the practices, the rituals that make for group loyalties. Even a universalist like Marx, for whom a fully realized humanity was the ideal, thought of

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solidarity in class terms (that is, workers bound together by common experiences and actions).

As a practice, universalism is the experience of the individual who has discovered essential humanity, those attributes he shares (but not necessarily in solidarity) with other persons. Universalists do not form parties, which incarnate the very spirit of faction; their thought and practice represent not an existing social or political condition but an unrealized future. Universalism is a promise but not yet a culture, weak in its contention with groups and parties that in their solidarity (sometimes a murderous solidarity) reflect lived experience. We see evidence of this in the ethnic, national and religious energies that have surfaced in the wake of the disintegration of totalitarian empire.

The practical strength of the ideological critic is that he represents a constituency, usually the dispossessed; the weakness of a moral philosopher like Kolakowski is that he is without a constituency. Whatever social effect he wishes his universalist discourse to have, the moral philosopher may find himself alone, struggling with the self-imposed necessity of being right according to his conscience. The social temptations of ideology may be irresistible. But if solidarity is not to turn into the murder of one group by another, the effort must be made constantly to extend the boundaries of solidarity to the point where it includes all of humanity.

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KAREN WILKIN

At the Galleries

Let's get it over with. The show that generated the most hoopla, the most extravagant hyperbole, and in some ways the most controversy, this past season was the Metropolitan Museum's "Lucien Freud: Recent Work." I should say at once that I am not one of Freud's ardent admirers. I take him seriously, because he is a paradigm of a peculiarly British tradition of painting and because I am fascinated by anyone trying to make ambitious figurative paintings, especially ambitious *figure* paintings, nowadays. But I am repelled by the self-conscious coyness of Freud's pictures, that "I dare you to look at how nasty I can be" quality that has apparently been part of the painter's stock-in-trade, in his life as in his art, since the beginning of his career. To this bad-boy pose, Freud's most recent works add a kind of Salon theatricality. Their heroic size makes them remind you of nothing so much as those posturing nineteenth-century "machines" designed to attract attention at official exhibitions. Curiously, these paintings of overscaled, meaty nudes become increasingly mannered and inert the more time you spend with them. A group of hyperstylized early works seen at Robert Miller Gallery during the first part of the Met's showing simply reinforced this impression. Explained by Freud's fans as part of his self-education as an artist, they reminded me of Ben Shahn at his most deliberately "sensitive."

Freud's pictures can be powerfully direct, his observations acute – especially, or perhaps exclusively, when he is dealing with flesh – but to my eye he is frequently more successful in his smaller, throwaway efforts than in his large "important" works. The best pictures at the Met included a deadpan "portrait" of a sink, some unpretentious portrait heads, and a half-size standing, fully clothed man. The big, "important" pictures were all too often simply too big, their flaccid expanses of Francis Bacon-esque space making the placement of the nudes seem arbitrary rather than imperative. But clearly, we are meant to pay most attention to the nudes – "naked people," Freud prefers to call them – since they are the most loaded parts of the paintings. Crusty piles of pigment, like the traces of a ghastly skin disease, are attached to joints and salient body parts, displaying and apparently glorifying the history of Freud's struggle. More often than not, however, these worked surfaces read not as records of intense feeling,

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Double Portrait (1985-86) by Lucian Freud. Oil on canvas. Private collection. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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The Field of Flax (1892) by Edgar Degas. Monotype and pastel. 25 by 34 cm. Private collection. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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but as the result of dogged labor, of an essentially mechanical process of overpainting, of adding stuff for the sake of doing *something,* no matter how devoid of feeling or driving impulse, as though sheer insistence could transform the lifeless into the eloquent. It's odd, in general, how unfelt Freud's paintings of the nude – all right, the naked – are. Bodies read more as slabs of meat than as individuals; the greyhound in that famous picture of the dog and woman lying side by side is far more personable and animated than its human companion.

The ghost of Francis Bacon haunts Freud's recent paintings. A large picture of two women on a bed was an exception – it read as an anorexic version of Courbet's notorious *Sleep* – but more typically, we are reminded of Bacon's compositional devices. The contrast between Freud's ferociously worked "naked people" and his summary rendering of their settings immediately evoked Bacon's habitual way of placing a splashily painted, gestural figure in the center of a conventionally painted room. (Whatever his shortcomings, Bacon was always better at putting a picture together than Freud.) The pervasive squalor and dinginess of Freud's *mise en scène,* however, largely the result of muddy color applied with a leaden touch, seemed an homage to Stanley Spencer at his most socially responsible. I wish I had been less aware that the color Freud almost always uses to refer to floorboards, in his recent pictures, is most readily achieved by mixing together the residue of a well-used palette.

Happily, there were alternatives to the much-hyped Freud exhibition. In the Met itself, until the beginning of April, you could restore your faith in the notion of excellence at a wonderful little show of Degas's landscapes, jointly organized by the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Tightly focused, beautifully selected, and intelligently installed, the show introduced us to a portion of Degas's work that was clearly of major importance to the artist but has remained all but unknown to us. Not only did the exhibition immensely enhance our understanding of this superb artist, but it was full of surprising, inventive, suggestive works that helped to transform our understanding of modernist landscape painting in general.

Elsewhere, exhibitions by contemporary artists offered still other surprises and rewards. The British painter Andrew Forge, a long-time resident of the United States, is better known in some circles for his trenchant, perceptive writing than for his painting, so a pair of back-to-back shows at Robert Morrison Gallery of Forge's recent works on paper, followed by recent canvases, were particularly welcome. Forge is a difficult painter to write about. His work is both intensely cerebral and purely optical, contradictory as that sounds. Describing his pictures, which are built of repeated, almost regular touches of muted but luminous color, gives no

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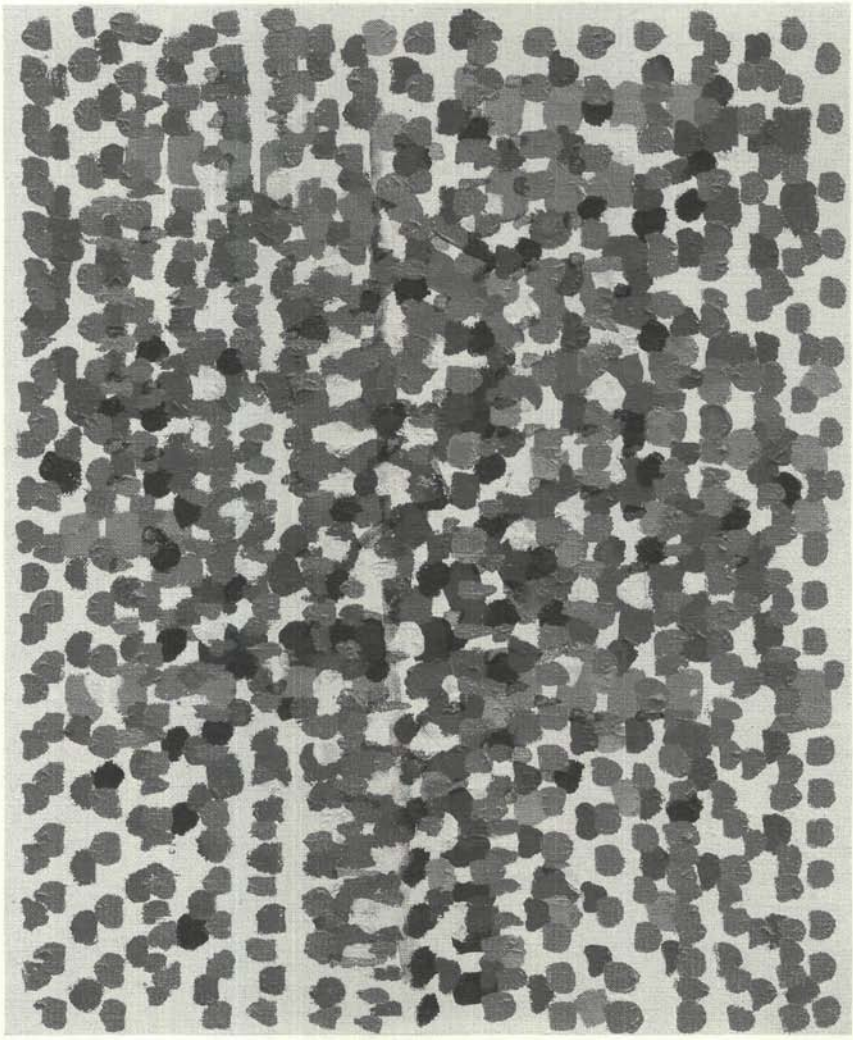

Study for March (1993) by Andrew Forge. Oil on canvas on board. 14 by 12 inches. Courtesy of Robert Morrison Gallery.

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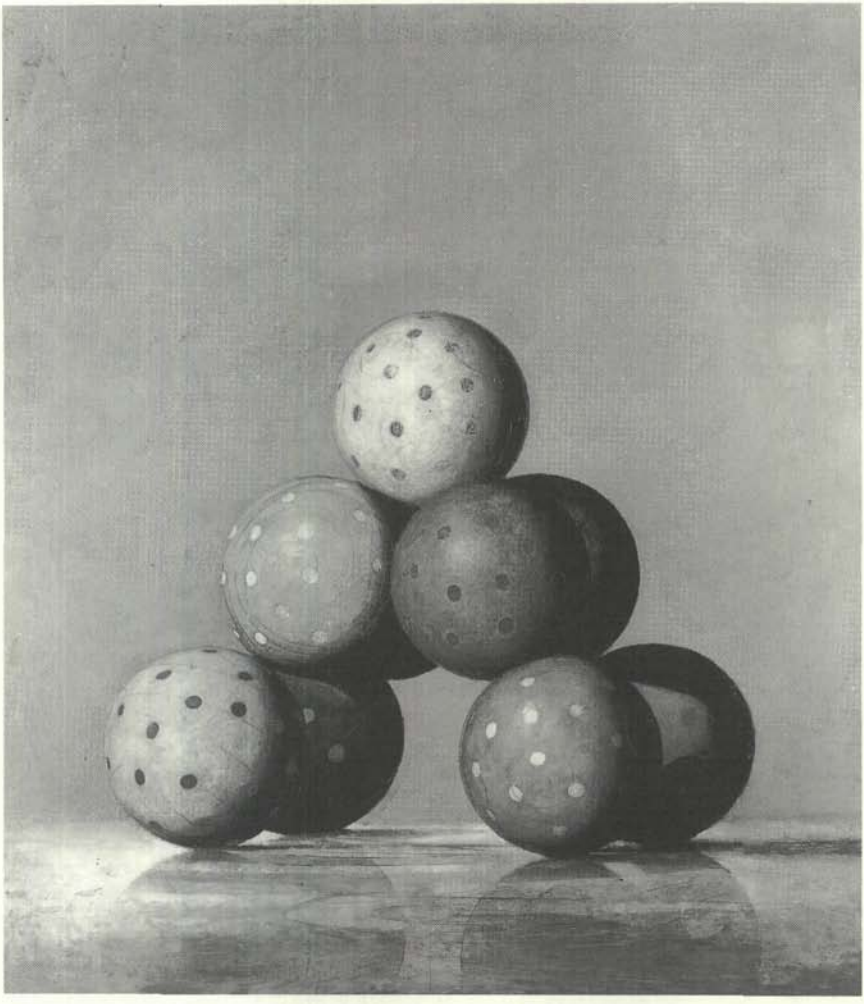

Small Dots (1994) by John Gibson. Oil on panel. 48 by 42 inches. Courtesy of Perspective Fine Arts.

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sense of how rich and seductive they can be. Without looking anything like landscapes, they seem to be about the natural order, about our perceptions of what is around us, and in the best paintings, about light and space magically distilled onto a relatively small surface. Forge's small pictures can be monumental, and the best ones breathe and pulse as though their carefully deposited patches of paint had only momentarily coalesced, while we watched. In general, the works on paper had more air than the canvases, although there was a small painting in earth tones that set a standard for just about everything else. There's high risk of the pictures becoming overloaded, clogged, a little too diagrammatic. But Forge is obviously aware of the perils. And I was delighted to learn that the paintings, both on paper and canvas, that I found most evocative and exciting were the most recent.

John Gibson, who showed recent work at Perspective Fine Arts Ltd., is an artist new to me but one whose work I will look for in the future. Like Forge's, Gibson's pictures are difficult to write about – they even photograph badly – because they depend a great deal upon nuances of surface and a declarative physical presence. It would be easy to make Gibson sound like a magical realist, but that would be misleading. He paints images of piles of balls, perhaps larger than life-size, although it's hard to know just how big these curious objects are. Often, the balls are patterned with spots or spirals; often, too, the configuration they assume – an open-based pyramid, for example – is wholly unbuildable. Everything subverts the logic of Gibson's geometric proposals – moody, mysterious light, overscaled reflections, implied wrenchings of perspective – so that no matter how initially convincing the image, it soon appears to be completely invented. But it's Gibson's sense of color and touch that really set his pictures apart and keep them from being exercises in rendering – a risk, since Gibson turns out to be yet another well-trained, highly accomplished product of Yale. His color is rich, a little chalky, beautifully orchestrated; you begin to suspect that he patterns the balls to give himself more places to put color. The mark of the painter's hand remains visible in his dry, rather brushy pigment, while occasionally incised drawing calls further attention to process and to the picture's existence as a made object. These odd, engaging pictures become odder and more engaging the more time you spend with them. They start to unravel, revealing their apparently naturalistic modeling and shading as mere conventions, tools of picture-making, like shape, color or texture, and they end up reading as still, solemn abstractions.

"Odd" and "engaging" were two of the first adjectives to come to mind in relation to Margery Mellman's show at the Project Room of The Painting Center, a relatively new artist-run exhibition space on Greene Street. I've been aware of Mellman's pictures for some years, and I've

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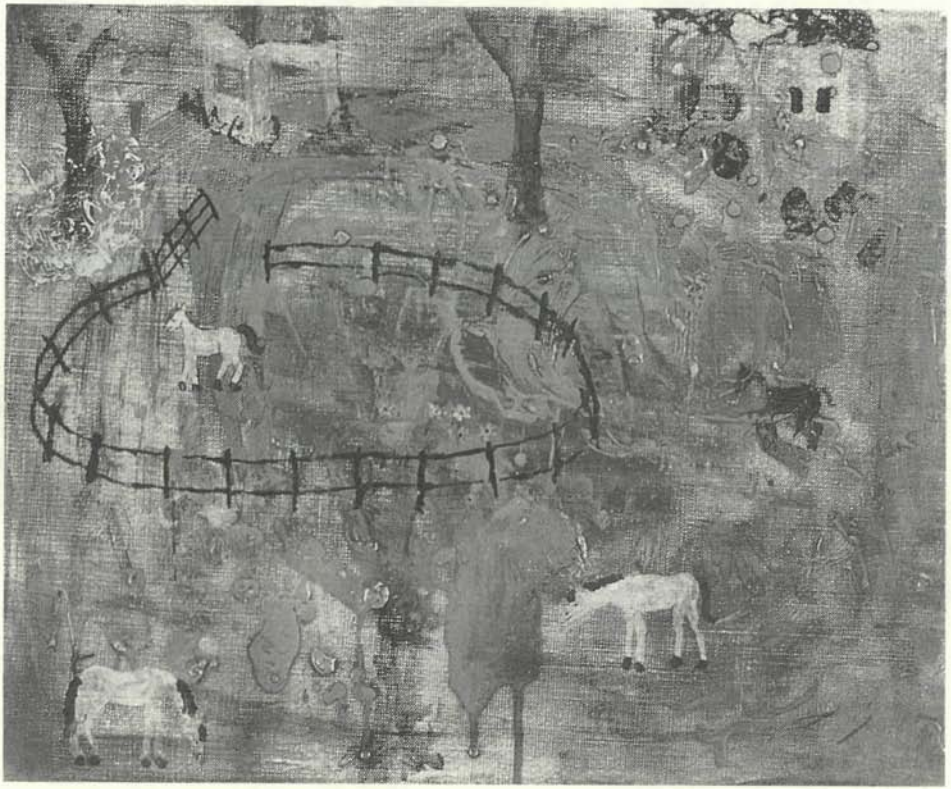

The Horses in the Yard (1992) by Margery Mellman. Oil on linen. 14 by 18 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

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Apple Orchard (1943-46) by Arshile Gorky. Pastel on paper. 42 by 52 inches. Courtesy of Gagosian Gallery, New York.

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never managed to decide whether she is an authentic naive, a very hip and cunning artist, or someone who operates in a zone different from that of the rest of us. Tiny, schematic horses and riders – cowboys, to judge by their hats – gallop across Mellman's dreamy, washy little canvases. Just when you've opted for the naive diagnosis, because of the childish, as opposed to "childlike," depiction of the cowboys and the just plain dumb way they appear to be disposed, you realize the elegance, subtlety and delicacy of the layers of paint and the freshness and unexpectedness of the color. The "dumbness" of the composition starts shifting, too, into a kind of elusive symmetry. I'm still not sure what I think of these pictures. They're loopy and at the same time impossible to forget. There's definitely something going on, something that is undeniably charming, very personal, and even witty. It's probably even rather knowing, unless, of course, the designation of naive is the correct one, which I doubt more and more. I am surprised at how much these pictures interest me. I wish I knew whether the cowboys were meant as an ironic counterpoint to the lyrical passages that they cut across and that sometimes threaten to obscure them. Or what?

There was no doubt about the excellence of the ambitious gathering of late works by Arshile Gorky (from between 1943 and 1947) seen at the Madison Avenue Gagosian Gallery, nor were there doubts about the artist's intentions. It was an exhibition any museum would have been proud of, an impressive assembly drawn from a variety of public and private collections that offered a good accounting of the full range of the mature Gorky toward the end of his tragically short life. This was the period when he painted his most uncanny, beautiful, and in some ways painful pictures, pictures whose imagery seems perpetually on the brink of revealing its origins but ultimately remains impenetrable, if richly suggestive. The show included some of the loosest, most liquid images of Gorky's last years along with firmer, denser pictures that explored similarly unstable, ambiguous imagery. As is always true of Gorky, the tension between apparent spontaneity and extraordinary control was breathtaking: the play of agonizingly delicate line against seemingly undisciplined washes, or of carefully stroked dense pigment against unnameable forms defined by sturdy drawing. Gorky's gifts as a colorist were evident, too, in pictures that ranged from monochrome silvery tones to deep, saturated, superheated hues. One might have wished for more depth in the presentation of particular works – it's always illuminating when the drawings, studies and multiple versions of images that obsessed Gorky most are reunited – but the show was nonetheless exciting and informative. Once again, we were reminded of how Gorky's mysterious lyricism can be deeply disturbing and ravishing all at once.

It's sobering, however, to realize that one relies more and more on

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commercial galleries to do this kind of show. (Amazingly enough, the exception is the Whitney's new "Collections in Context" series, which most recently focused on the museum's important and very beautiful Gorky, *The Betrothal,* brought together with studies and alternate versions of the picture.)

In the past, however, Gagosian's "historical" shows have frequently promised more than they delivered or were titled in a way that raised unrealistic expectations. A fairly recent Max Beckmann exhibition was typical, a well-chosen show that included a respectable number of significant works. But why was it called, portentously, "Max Beckmann: The Self-Portraits," which suggested a comprehensiveness and completeness that was not even attempted? (I realize that "Max Beckmann: Some Self-Portraits That We Were Able to Borrow" is less impressive.) The modest but wide-ranging Gorky show posed no such problems. Let's hope that it is an augury of what we can expect in the future.

Among other pleasures of this past season, I would note Richard Diebenkorn's works on paper at Knoedler and Company. There may have been too many pictures in the show, which, for some reason, is fairly typical of the way the gallery has been installing their exhibitions of late, but if you concentrated on individual works, you were well rewarded. The collages impressed me especially, partly because of their artless, slightly shopworn quality. They were at once quite magical and somewhat offhand, like works still in progress. They seemed fresh, unpretentious, like thinking made visible. By contrast, some of the gouaches seemed labored, overrefined, and overadjusted in a manner that I associate with many of Diebenkorn's late canvases. But the best of the paper works had a monumentality and directness that reminded me once again of how powerful this artist could be, particularly in some of his bold, juicy interiors of the 1960s. A selection of Diebenkorn's prints, on the lower level of the gallery, served as a kind of miniature retrospective, ranging from early figurative images to "signature" Ocean Park configurations. It wasn't, perhaps, an exhibition that would change anyone's mind about Diebenkorn, but it certainly sharpened our awareness of the intimate side of his activity and in doing so helped to suggest how some of his better-known, large-scale works evolved. That's always valuable and helpful.

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Modern Document

From the Correspondence of Thomas Mann and Agnes Meyer

Thomas Mann's extensive correspondence with Agnes Meyer was published in Germany in 1992. It began with a letter of homage, which Meyer sent to Mann soon after she interviewed him in April of 1937. She informed him that in addition to being a journalist at *The Washington Post,* she was also "the wife of Eugen Meyer, owner and publisher of *The Washington Post* and former Governor of the Federal Reserve Board." She suggested that Mann present the following season's prestigous lecture series on "Can Democracy Survive?" which had been initiated by Mrs. Bayard Cutting, "in memory of her son, one of our most liberal Senators who was killed in an air crash."

Soon thereafter, Agnes Meyer encouraged Mann to come to America with his family. She first arranged a fellowship for him at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton and then for another one at the Library of Congress. Her selfless admiration developed into an intellectual – but not only an intellectual – partnership. Theirs was a deep and reciprocal friendship, although Meyer was very sure of herself and had the courage to contradict Mann at times. He called her the "Fürstin" (Princess), and for the rest of his life he considered himself her protegé. Discreetly, Meyer used her high connections and intellectual sophistication on behalf of Mann and his family; she introduced him to all of America. He trusted her judgement on literary and personal matters; he asked her advice and sent her his manuscripts; and he encouraged her in her own writing. He did not hesitate to ask for her help in getting the members of his family out of Europe at a time when this could no longer have been accomplished without special intervention at the highest U. S. government levels.

We are publishing the following letter not only because it gives the flavor of this correspondence but also because it mentions Mann's first contact with *Partisan Review.*

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August 25, 1944
1550 San Remo Drive
Pacific Palisades, California

My dearest friend,

Bill's picture, with his expression of youthful suffering has something about it that is too emblematic for it not to have affected me deeply and on a more than personal level. I studied it for a long time and your own figure seemed to me to take on something of the *mater dolorosa*. Take it back! I understand how precious it is to you. May the dear, brave, worthy young man be one of those who return safe and sound – albeit with impressions of life's cruelty that are not easily overcome – from this catastrophe of insanity and folly!

I will add little today and am in fact only writing because I know that you are longing for the picture. My correspondence keeps me busy, though I put it off as much as possible for the work by which I am peculiarly obsessed. I often get to bed late because of it and because we are at the moment very sociable. Strangely enough, as if by magnetic force, music plays a much greater role than usual. This evening we are invited to the composer Toch's, who for some reason wants to play a new work for me.[1] Also Ernest Krenek visited us recently. We spoke at length about the state of music, about Schönberg, and the so charismatic Stravinsky. I recently read something very good on the latter in *Partisan Review,* a magazine I hardly knew and which surprised me with the unusual – if it were not unpatriotic I would say European – standard of its articles.[2] Do you know it?

I'm embarrassed not to be able to send you the chapter I had promised. The reason is that I took the manuscript back from my secretary for a necessary revision.[3] She now has it again, and I have spurred her on to hurry.

You are only too correct in what you say about – or rather against – my lecture tour next year. Whenever I think about it, from whatever perspective, I always become very doubtful. The difficulties of travel, of accommodation, etc., join my inner difficulties; for, which topic should one address, what can one plan on saying, how can one prepare oneself when one has no idea how the world will look at the time? On the other hand, last winter I committed myself to Colston Leigh for January and February, 1945, and I know that at least Hunter College in New York has signed up with him for a lecture. Washington also has its appeal, and at least once a year a change of scenery is good, even necessary. What to do? I do not know if I can get out of my agreement with Leigh. I would have to act deathly ill. And isn't Archie counting on my official visit?[4] It

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should be possible after all to pull together something independent, personal, and reasonably acceptable that can still be modified at the last minute according to circumstances. Thank heavens we still have time.

If you have anything consoling to tell me about Bruno Frank, please do not forget to do so.

Paris was annoying nonsense on the part of the French liberators, and I can imagine that Eisenhower is furious with General König.[5] The Gaullists are like children who want to do everything themselves but then have to call for help. Furthermore, our military action in France exceeds all expectations, and I think even the Russians are deeply impressed – which is very good. Yet, despite it all, I don't dare hope for an end to the European war this year. According to military reason it is over; but in Germany reason has been beaten down. Everything there has once again become demonic-irrational, and one cannot know exactly how reasonable or fantastic is the hope that the war be dragged out long enough – until certain means of changing the entire situation have been worked out. Physics will indeed determine the development of new sources of power (naturally not only in Germany) that will turn everything upside down. And so it is annoying for a people to have their fate determined by the outcome of a war that is ended by such a last-minute discovery.

Well, this is a full-length letter after all!

Do you have a book coming out soon? Golo has not written us about his correspondence with you on this subject. I wonder if he is right – and, since you speak of humorlessness, the question immediately follows whether or not you are right.[6]

Always yours,

T. M.

Notes:

1. Born in Vienna, the composer Ernst Toch (1887-1964) emigrated in 1933 and taught at the New School for Social Research from1934 to 1936. After 1936, he taught at the University of Southern California. The new work was probably Opus 65, "Cantata of the Bitter Herbs."
2. Nicholas Nabokov, "Stravinsky Now," *Partisan Review* Number 3, 1944, Volume 11.
3. Hilda Kahn, Thomas Mann's secretary from 1943 to 1952.
4. Archibald MacLeish was Librarian of Congress from 1939 to 1945.
5. General Marie Pierre König (1898-1970), an ally of General Charles de Gaulle. According to newspaper reports, Eisenhower was annoyed by the ambition and desire for prestige of the Gaullists and the resistance groups during the liberation of Paris (August 25, 1944) and the victory parade.
6. This is apparently the response to a no longer extant letter.

Translated from the German by Tess Lewis

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FREEMA GOTTLIEB

From Mao to Moses

During a recent visit to Paris, I met Benny Levy, who in the late 1960s was one of the key figures in the French radical intelligentsia, as well as Sartre's protegé and secretary. Levy, under the alias of Peter Victor, had been one of the foremost figures of '68, a Maoist who later became the leader of the proletarian left. In the seventies, however, while he was working most closely with Sartre, he suddenly metamorphosed into an Orthodox Jew.

When I telephoned Levy at his home in Strasbourg, I told him I had written a book on images of light in Jewish spiritual texts, but that I wanted to meet with him as a journalist. He agreed but asked: "You *are* a religious girl, aren't you?"

He suggested we meet on the weekday evening on which he came to Paris from Strasbourg to teach an extension course at the Jussieu-sector of the University. The rendezvous, he told me with satisfaction, was to take place after the class at the home of his friend, an Oscar-winning film producer, in the Marais – the old Jewish quarter of Paris. "You don't mind leaving at midnight?" he said.

"I don't mind."

"And you *are* a religious girl?"

"Yes."

Later it occurred to me that I might want to sit in on one of Levy's classes. I phoned the film producer, who declined on Levy's behalf. "It's an inner circle that has been together for twenty years. Even my participation is questionable. It's only because I prepare copies of the text with commentaries that I am permitted to listen in. . . . These are his old comrades, you understand." In his various self-transformations, apparently, Peter Victor had taken the cream of his generation with him. I began to sense that here were private spiritual worlds that not everyone could penetrate.

Our meeting took place, as stipulated, late at night, in a gothic-looking apartment in the Rue de la Turenne on the Place des Vosges. A sweet young woman in a wig – the mark of Orthodox married womanhood – opened the door and gestured to me to sit down at the dining table and offered me a glass of orange juice. Everything was very correct, clean,

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simple, bourgeois, but there was no warmth, no welcome, no conversation. The room was bare, except for a few holy books in leather bindings. Then Levy and his friend burst into the room, laughing and joking with each other, the woman's husband (the host) now cast in the role of interpreter and buffer between Levy and me.

The question that first comes to mind is: why have Levy and so many other radicals, deconstructionists, and ex-Maoists found consolation in the sacred text? Was the need to remake their lives, shared by so many born-again Jews in the United States and Israel, the result of an identity crisis and search for roots, a need for fraternity, or a need to gain some kind of mastery of the world by dividing it into "us" and "them"? Was Marx himself a case of a displaced yearning for transcendence from the realm of the spiritual to the plane of history? Levy claimed that he turned to the Torah from a position of strength, not weakness. In France, unlike in America, people still see in metaphysics the mistress of all sciences. For him the lure of the Torah lay in its superiority in the philosophical sphere, he told me, and not in any search for an identity prop. He protested, too, that his identity had not changed much; he had remained a political and intellectual radical, and he was as much against "sociological jellification" as always.

Yet he no longer took his revolutionary cues from Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Sartre, or Mao. He had discovered that the same metaphysical questions could be answered much better by the Hebrew text. A lecture he had happened to attend on the Biblical account of Creation given by the phenomenologist philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, had made him aware of what he referred to as "the special power there is in the Holy Text. . . . And that was the beginning of everything!" Restlessly weighing the copy I had brought him of my *Jewish Book of Light* in his hands and flicking through the pages, he launched into an extended arabesque of artificial but incandescent wit: "This first encounter with the Torah," he reminisced poetically, "was so strange, luminous with the clarity of the message it distilled, while in its infinite depths remaining nevertheless obscure."

The paradox I find at the heart of Levy's position is not his often-repeated claim that the Torah is in fact liberating, but that he should be the one to make such a claim. There is something of medieval casuistry, a legacy from the Christian theological tradition, that has become an inextricable part of much of European intellectualism, including the French ideological and ethical abstractions so divorced from the practicalities of life. With this particular legacy, Levy, recent convert as he might claim to be, has formed his most natural affinities. It seems as if his metamorphosis from Maoism to Orthodoxy did not require any deep attitudinal change,

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simply a shift from one dogmatism to another. But the qualities that attracted Levy to the Torah, which the Christianized Western world and the assimilated Jewish one have scarcely heard of, are precisely those of which he himself was most in need – "openness," infinite flexibility, vitality, and an organic integration of abstract ethics with a pragmatism arising from acquaintance with a complex, sensuous reality.

When I met him, I found Levy's aggressive defensiveness extremely off-putting. Only later when I went over my notes did I realize that what he said made sense from an intellectual point of view, and that he himself was aware of his own shortcomings. When asked about his childhood, he remembered "that other side of Judaism, besides the metaphysics and the relationship with the text . . . the biological connection that was handed on to me by my grandmother, my mother, and my mother-in-law." (In time-honored fashion, this leader of the radical sixties neatly associates the more instinctual, pragmatic, and irrational sides of the Jewish experience with the feminine.) What specifically did he remember about any of these women? When it came to the actual details Levy was rather vague: "Oh, visiting my grandmother of course. The peace of Shabbat. For the first thirty years of my life all that was for me so much primitive superstition, for which during the past ten years I have been supremely grateful. . . . In Egypt, I remember chickens all over the place. Before Yom Kippur, the chickens were held live over one's head, feathers flying for removal of sin. And afterwards, when the Shofar was blown, all of us rushing to the water, also for the removal of sin."

He remembered his grandmother's recoil when she saw her own daughter frying chickens in butter. While her family were turning away from the old customs and assimilating, his grandmother could do nothing but look on. "Her only defense was sadness," Levy said. "What she gave me was the minimum vocabulary that later would help me learn the language of holiness. Otherwise, I might as well have been a convert, learning everything from scratch. She gave me a certain natural confidence. Once, when I was saying a blessing in Yeshiva, a rabbi passed by and asked me in amazement, 'Where did you learn that tune?' As if I possessed something very precious. I learned it from my grandmother.

"My mother-in-law is Polish and was already very old when I met her, with an atrocious Polish accent, but she refuses to learn French. She went through Auschwitz. This is no lofty and refined literature about the Holocaust, this is a 'piece' of the Holocaust itself, a morsel of the Divine Presence, a snippet of the most vulgar Jewish experiences through which the Shekhinah herself is manifest.

"Those are the women in my life. As for the men, I have always been lucky in my teachers, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean Zacklad. . . . For all the great metaphysical questions, these men had a better answer than Plato.

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What drew me to the *ecritures* to begin with was precisely its openness," Levy told me. "Each Hebrew word was a window opening out onto vistas. . . . People just don't know how different Judaism is from Christian and Western thought. I didn't know. And until I had gone over it with him again and again, Sartre too did not know how little the Christian Bible and the Jewish Torah have in common."

"It's all an invitation to take part in, you know, that surrealist game of folding papers and adding messages, 'telephones,' I think it's called in English." His eyes gleamed with the inherent boyishness of intellectual play, his *casquette* falling over his eyes. "Within that context, one can discuss everything!" Levy declared.

Sartre, I discovered in my subsequent research, had originally become interested in Victor because of the latter's charisma for radical youth, and he allowed his reputation as an intellectual idol to protect his young Maoist friend whenever the French government tried to quash Victor. When they started proceedings to close down Victor's party newspaper, *La Cause du Peuple,* Sartre became its editorial director, promising not to interfere in its actual running. Again, when Victor was threatened with deportation, Sartre personally appealed to the newly-elected right-wing Prime Minister, Giscard D'Estaing, arguing that he was becoming virtually blind and that Victor alone was qualified to become his secretary. Giscard must have been irritated by Sartre's appeal. According to him, Levy was nothing less than a militant extremist, conveniently without French citizen papers, and therefore easily gotten rid of. Sartre had to promise to "take full responsibility" for the "boy" so as to turn him into "a useful member of society from now on." What strikes one as rather comical, under the circumstances, is Giscard's rather tongue-in-cheek attitude to Sartre as France's cultural icon, for actually the Master probably was more prone to advocating revolutionary violence than the unruly kid he was supposed to bring to heel.

I believe the newly religious Levy construes that Sartre, in saving him from being deported, had saved his life. For Levy, the bitterest exile would have been exile from his adopted intellectual motherland. He had already suffered banishment from Egypt. In Belgium, Benny had felt completely foreign, identifying with a feeling of exile and international statelessness forever after. Perhaps part of his attraction to Sartre was his empathy with Sartre's "man from nowhere." For Victor, it would have been too painful to become stateless again. Sartre had saved him from this, and even if their intellectual affinities had not existed, this would have been sufficient for Levy to remain eternally indebted to Sartre.

At the time, it seemed as if only Victor had something to gain from the relationship. But Sartre, himself childless, was eager to keep his links

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with young people and to learn especially what the radical elements were thinking. Far from functioning *in loco parentis* as a stabilizing agent for Victor's radical fervor, Sartre adored the rejuvenation that his contact with the young leader of the left gave him. For the older man, Victor represented the embodiment of Sartre's lifetime fantasies of some ideal combination of thinker and heroic man of action. And that was why he was prepared to go to such extraordinary lengths for Levy. Levy's job as Sartre's secretary entailed far more than merely taking down the master's words in shorthand and typing his correspondence. Actually, Victor was being paid for friendship, for being an intellectual companion to Sartre, against whom he could sharpen his opinions before trying them out on the general public. Together with a more moderate leftist, Philippe Gavi, Sartre and Victor collaborated on a huge manuscript, *On a raison de se revolter* (published by Gallimard in 1974), tracing Sartre's political evolution and his relationship with the new left after 1968.

In the last published exchange between Sartre and Levy, most of it about Sartre's *volte face* over the Jewish question, Levy took his master to task on the question of the justification of violence by the extreme left. According to Levy, there existed in Sartre's work "a profound inclination towards an ethic of violence." For example, Levy claimed, in Sartre's introduction to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* violence against colonialism is given a redemptive role, which Levy later argued against. How could Sartre advocate revolutionary violence on the colonialist issue, he demanded, when he had not taken a stand against legalized mass violations of human rights perpetrated in his own country by the Vichy government? Colonialism, bad as it was, was not Nazism. If the goal of revolution is to extend fraternity beyond family, race, or group to interrelate all human beings, then how is it that this sense of brotherhood usually makes its presence felt through its opposite, the killing of one's enemy?

Yet hadn't Victor and his Maoist friends at one time advocated hatred, in *La Cause du Peuple,* as "the clearest expression of a revolutionary consciousness"? Like many on the extreme left, Levy had argued that the bourgeoisie, under the guise of hating violence, had "internalized the Judeo-Christian mentality," which they sought to project as a universal ethic, while unconsciously using it to preserve a status quo based on the exploitation and abuse of fellow humans en masse. The younger Levy had understood and articulated the revolutionary position that justifies terrorist tactics, but unlike his co-revolutionaries in the Red Brigades and the Baader-Meinhof gang, he refrained from shedding blood for these theoretical tenets. It was on this question of violence that Victor felt forced to surrender his ascendancy in the proletarian left, and the real conflict centered on his refusal to let his group participate in terrorist attacks on

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targets suggested to him by the PLO.

It is forgotten in the current polarized positions of Arab and Jew that when more Jews lived in the Arab countries, many of them championed the rights of the Arab poor. Thus, while their mother was a Zionist, an uncle of the three Levy brothers founded the Communist Party in Egypt. The whole family, however, had been forced to leave after the 1956 Suez crisis. One brother, Bobby, out of a wish to stay and work for the betterment of his compatriots, converted to Islam and changed his name to Mahmoud Hussein. After being imprisoned by the Egyptians as a Communist, he was released and permitted to leave, joining the rest of his his family who had emigrated via Brussels to Paris. There, not only had the two other Levy brothers, Tony and Benny, joined the Union des Etudiants Communistes as advocates of Algerian liberation, but Tony also helped found the anti-Zionist Jewish Students' League at the Cité Universitaire. In 1969 the former Bobby Levy became very close to Yassir Arafat and introduced his brothers to the top echelons of the PLO. As a result, a delegation of the Gauche Proletariat was invited to take part in a field trip to Karame, a Palestinian refugee camp. Benny Levy's wife Leo was among the participants. When the delegation was asked to explain, on Fatah radio, the presence of Jews in their midst, Levy's group replied tersely that they had not come as Jews, but as sympathizers with the Palestinian liberation struggle. One of the PLO's demands was that the delegation prevail on Sartre, who had been so supportive of the Algerian liberation struggle, to support the Palestinian cause. Although Victor's proletarians themselves sympathized with the Palestians, the most Sartre would do was to smooth the proletarians' road with the French authorities, while remaining deaf to anti-Zionist arguments. He was too ambivalent about his own actions, or rather, his non-actions under the Occupation, and too emotionally involved with the creation of Israel to feel anything but affection for the Jewish state.

In September 1972, after the slaying of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, the Gauche Proletariat came out with a condemnation of the massacre, repudiating the notion of collective guilt and the consequent legitimacy of random terror, while they reaffirmed their solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. At about that time, Levy said that if their model for activism had been revolution and not resistance, he could have seen a possible case for resorting to violence, but he and his fellow "extremists" were all second-generation Holocaust survivors, and their methods and models were different. The closest Levy and his comrades ever got to approaching real violence was when it came, not to some random target chosen by the PLO or to some arch-capitalist victimizer, but to the direct influence of the Resistance model. In 1971, when the Pompidou government pardoned Paul Touvier, head of the French mili-

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tia in Lyon under the Occupation, a man directly responsible for the mass killing of his fellow citizens, Levy and the Gauche Proletariat saw, in this amnesty from the powers-that-be, a clear association between the French right-wing government and Vichy collaborationism. The Gauche Proletariat demanded the guillotine for Touvier and his summary "liquidation," holding their party responsible for his execution. A group calling itself the New Resistance but made up of members of the Gauche Proletariat traced Touvier to the village where he was hiding. There they suddenly lost him. When asked whether, if they had managed to get hold of him, they would have carried out the sentence, these "militants," all Jews, had to admit that even in this case it was highly doubtful that they would actually have been up to taking a life.

The same attitude was illustrated by the way Levy's Maoists handled the case of Robert Nogrette, social administrator of the Renault factory, whom they kidnapped in revenge for the right-wing slaying of one of their comrades, Pierre Overnay, in March 1972. Nogrette was aware of the spate of murders committed by leftist terrorists in other countries, and he was convinced that his captors also intended to kill him – until he realized that they were taking extreme care of his health – even to the point of providing him with the salt-free diet he was used to following. On another occasion, Levy's proletarians played the part of Robin Hood, taking over Fauchon's luxury delicatessen and shipping its contents – truffles, foie gras, caviar, *marrons glaces,* and rare liqueurs – to shelters for workers and poor blacks at Saint-Denis and at Ivry. Finally, when invited by the PLO to put into effect his theories about the place of violence in the liberation struggle, Levy dismantled his own party.

And then came Levy's encounter with the Hebrew text. Unlike many who undergo religious conversion, Levy wished to share his experiences with those who had been close to him. By night, he learned about the mysteries of creation with Levinas, and in the morning, when he and Sartre asked each other how they had spent the previous evening, Levy related his increasing enthusiasm about the Talmud, Kabbalah, the Bible, and all sorts of branches of Jewish knowledge that Sartre had never heard of. Sartre confided to Simone de Beauvoir his apprehension that Victor might yet turn out a rabbi. As time went by, however, Levy said, Sartre became more sympathetic: what mattered to his protegé mattered to him. As a result, Levy arranged a meeting between his two teachers. In fact, Sartre had already encountered Levinas, at least in his writing, as far back as the thirties. Sartre had reached a turning point in his philosophical development, when he came across an introduction to Husserl by Levinas. Simone de Beauvoir records how Sartre leafed through the pages of his intellectual find, unable to put this book down until he had finished

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reading it. According to Levinas, Husserl became the basis for Sartre's own subsequent existentialist approach in *Being and Nothingness*. The meeting between the two great men, however, Levy indicated to me, was catastrophic. For all the smokescreen of philosophical theory, Sartre was extremely jealous of Levinas's influence on his protegé. And for some reason, Levinas also could not stand being in the same room with Sartre.

Yet apart from this disastrous encounter, Levy told me, Sartre's whole understanding of the nature of Judaism and the Jewish people was transformed "much to the chagrin of de Beauvoir," during his friendship with Levy. Throughout his life, Sartre was what might be called a philo-Semite. He began to develop ties with Jews (such as Claude Lanzmann who later directed *Shoah*) only after the war. In *Reflexions sur la Question Juive,* he had made it his business to administer a crippling blow to anti-Semitism. At the time, he thought that the Jew was a pure creation of the anti-Semite; otherwise, the man was not a Jew at all, but simply his fellow human. Sartre's whole intention then had been to get both Jew and non-Jew to cast off the negatives imposed by the idea of the "Other" and restore the Jew's essential humanity. But this picture did not acknowledge the existence of a positive difference in the "Other," of Jewish reality beyond anti-Semitic projections. It was only his relationship with Levy, Sartre confessed in his last exchange with him, published in 1980 in *Le Nouvel Observatuer,* that made him realize that in order to write about Jews, he needed access to their linguistic context – Hebrew or Yiddish – and he certainly needed to read some books on the subject. Sartre's essential discovery was that there was "a Jewish reality as there was a Christian reality" and that the reality of the Jew was metaphysical. Whether or not Jews in general are as prone to metaphysical speculation as Sartre makes them out to be, Levy certainly was.

In France, the association of Sartre the idol with a "handsome young stud" and some kind of commune of young people roused up all kinds of salacious gossip. But it might have disturbed the French even more if they had known that the idol of freethinkers was spending his Friday evenings at a Sabbath table with his two new young Sephardic Jewish friends. Certainly, Sartre's interest in the eighteen-year-old Arlette Elkaim had started off in a fashion conventional enough to fit French taste, as a physical attraction. But his legal adoption of his mistress came just at the time when he was no longer able to enjoy much sexual contact with anyone. It was to make it easy for her and Victor to obtain French citizenship that he adopted Arlette and made Victor his secretary. So the childless idol of French free-thinkers ended up with Jewish heirs and a stake in a totally Jewish sense of futurity. At the end of his life, Sartre took an interest in this Jewish belief in the future, the feeling that there is a point to human

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history and something to strive for, "beyond (and in spite of) despair." His new belief contradicted all his nihilistic existentialist thinking up until that point. In his last published exchange, he translated ingredients from his young Jewish friend's optimism into his own thinking about mankind and political realities.

De Beauvoir, however, did not like the fact that at the end of his life her erstwhile lover had found this kind of peace of mind, for this way of thinking was totally alien to the Sartre she claimed to know. She challenged Victor's position, even hinted that Sartre had grown senile and that the real Sartre, the man France had come to revere as the epitome of the radical spirit, must be protected against the person he had become under the influence of his new friends. She succeeded in blocking the publication of a discussion on Middle East peace efforts that Sartre and his secretary undertook before he died. However, she was unable to prevent the publication of Sartre's last exchange with Levy, on his new attitude to revolutionary violence, his feelings about the future, and his revised view of the "Jewish queston."

During the final months of Sartre's life, Arlette had starting translating story passages of the Talmud, which she read to him in the evenings. Levy told me, "Sartre went into the next world armed with forty full pages of the Talmud," beaming at me triumphantly. "Sartre died . . . convinced, I am sure, of the unlimited power in the Jewish text." Levy said that he was absolutely certain Sartre was a "son of the world to come." Since Sartre had had no belief in God whatsoever, I was rather astonished. "If," said Levy," with a rare burst of emotion, "the Sfat Emit [the sixteenth-century rabbi] could state that Cardinal Richelieu earned his portion in the world to come by banning the burning of the Talmud, then how much more so can Sartre, who wrote a tract defending the Jewish people against anti-Semitim, be included among those 'righteous gentiles' whose place in the next world is totally assured!"

Through his condemnation of anti-Semitism in *Reflexions sur la Queston Juive,* Sartre may or may not have been responsible for the saving of Jewish lives, but practically and personally, he made all the difference to the young Peter Victor and could indeed be said to have saved his young protegé's life, on two counts. In Jewish lore, it is said that if one receives as little as a single insight, a single teaching, from someone, it is as if one owes that person one's life. Parents, to whom one does owe one's life, are to be honored like God, and teachers like parents, for in a sense they remake us. On the other hand, in Jewish tradition, when it comes to converts or those who return to the faith, it is usual to cut off links with past teachers and influences, and even with natural parents if they might prove an attachment to old patterns of life. But for Levy, this does not

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appear to have been the case. In 1985, five years after Sartre's death, during the period when Levy entered the Strasbourg Yeshiva and became totally observant, he published a book, *Au nom de l'homme,* which attempts to show how following Sartre's thinking about questions of humanism and human justice leads directly to Judaism. Whatever its intellectual value (and the critics appear to have been so stunned that they neither hailed the book nor panned it), it is a tribute to Sartre. Any claim that Victor entered into a relationship with Sartre only for what he could get out of it is put to rest by this work. Levy was thoroughly imbued with the entire Sartrean *oeuvre;* he was obsessed with his master, taking him as an authority in the same way that he once took Maoist doctrines and now takes the Torah. In his book he does his utmost to integrate Sartre's thought with his own new world view.

But what happened to all the universalist concerns expressed in Levy's Maoist days? Now, Levy's only diversion from his immersion in Jewish learning in Strasbourg is his teaching of the specific seven commandments of the Torah to non-Jews, his former Maoists. Apparently, in the Maoist days, Benny had enjoyed a sense of camaraderie that he was still loath to break. He felt bound to share all that mattered to him with his special band of comrades, in the same way that he had shared it with Sartre. Levy introduced me to one of his students, who was to drive him to the station after our meeting. "Meet Dan, he's an actor in the other part of his life. We've been friends since . . . how long has it been, Dan?"

"Since the seventies."

"Yes, we did everything together. We were in the proletarian left together. Together we dismantled that outfit. Together created our own Socratic circle. True, there was a difference between Jews and Gentiles. Jews were supposed to learn Talmud all day, an activity that created its own unique space. Still, everyone remained comrades together, the Gentiles sharing in those laws that applied to them." There were some ten thousand ex-leftists, Levy said, all of them his friends. He collapsed with laughter. " 'What did you do in the proletarian left, honey?' 'Oh, I worked in my daddy's Renault factory.' That what it's all about, isn't it? And that's why I gave up on it, too."

When I asked him what he meant, Levy merely continued to laugh.

"Oh, he didn't mean for you to understand," said the film producer, who had been interpreting. "Just another in-joke."

Presumably, now that Levy had found his metier in the study of the Torah, he had no desire to rejoin the workers. He questioned even his own urges to philosophize.

"Why?" I asked.

"Well, is it right to take time off from learning the holy text for such

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things? But to return to what you were saying. You ask what I have to say about my relation nowadays to the proletarian left. Well, the only way I can really answer that is with a song." Very softly, he began to hum: "*We all live in a yellow submarine, yellow submarine, yellow submarine. And our friends are all aboard. Many more of them live next door . . . We all live in a yellow submarine, and* . . . . And now, if you'll excuse me, I've got to catch the last train back to Strasbourg."

And he and his old Gentile comrade of the proletarian left made a speedy exit.

Coming in
Partisan Review

- **On Anti-Semitism:** Saul Bellow, Eugene Genevose, John Gross, Edith Kurzweil, Cynthia Ozick, Martin Peretz, William Phillips, Norman Podhoretz, Robert Wistrich
- An Interview with David Riesman by David Barbosa
- Mark Lilla on the Counter-Enlightenment
- *Clement Greenberg's Criticism* by Karen Wilkin
- Morris Dickstein on Martin Scorsese
- Susan Miron: *New Fiction from Eastern Europe*
- Vladimir Tismaneanu on E. M. Cioran

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ALEXANDER M. ETKIND

Trotsky and Psychoanalysis

Recently uncovered documentary evidence about Adolf Abramovich Ioffe has thrown a new light on the relationship between psychoanalysis and Trotsky's own work. Ioffe was a professional underground organizer of the October uprising, and later became an important diplomat. In 1908, after he met Trotsky in Vienna, they collaborated in publishing *Pravda*. Ioffe had to flee Russia five times to avoid arrest. He had propagandized for the revolution in numerous Russian towns; helped a comrade escape from a Sevastopol military prison; transported illegal literature to Baku. He was deported from Germany by a special decree of the Imperial Chancellor. In 1917, he headed the Soviet delegation that signed the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. He participated in the Geneva talks, and was Soviet Ambassador to Germany, China, Japan, and Austria. In 1927, he committed suicide.

According to Trotsky, by the time he met Ioffe in Vienna in 1908, Ioffe already had "a certain political past," although Ioffe was in Vienna as both a medical student and a patient. Trotsky observed of him:

> Despite his extremely imposing appearance, too imposing for his age, the extreme calmness of tone, the patient gentleness of conversation and extraordinary politeness, the characteristics of peace of mind, Ioffe had actually been very neurotic since a very young age. . . . His look, as if absent, but at the same time deeply concentrated, belied strenuous, troubled internal work. . . . Even the need to communicate with some people, and particularly to make telephone calls, made him nervous, frightened and tired him.

At the time, Vienna was the world capital of psychoanalysis. It seemed inevitable that Ioffe's analyst would be Alfred Adler, who by then was practicing his own version of psychoanalysis – which, it will be recalled, considered the will to power rather than sexuality to be the primary drive of humanity. It is likely that Adler's associations with young

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Editor's Note: References in this essay to published archival materials are cited fully in *Eros of the Impossible. The History of Psychoanalysis in Russia* by Alexander M. Etkind (St. Petersburg: Meduza, 1993).

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Russian Marxists contributed to the development of his ideas. As we know, Freud did not accept Adler's innovations, and Adler and his followers withdrew from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society.

Trotsky knew of these difficulties but chose to interpret them in his own way. He stated in 1911 that Ioffe "was treated by the celebrated individual psychologist Alfred Adler of the Freudian school, who had already left the ranks and founded a faction of his own." At the time, Ioffe was traveling, inspecting Communist Party organizations on behalf of *Pravda*. Trotsky saw Adler "now and then," through the family of an old revolutionary with whom both were intimate, Kliachko (at whose Moscow funeral Trotsky would later speak). In 1923, Trotsky wrote to Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, "In the years of my stay in Vienna I was fairly close to the Freudians, read their works, and even attended their meetings." However, Trotsky had not meet Freud himself and was referring to the circle of Adler, whom he characterized as either a factionalist or a heretic:

> My initiation, though very general, to the mysteries of psychoanalysis was through this heretic who became the first priest of a new sect. But my actual guide into the sphere of this little-know hereticism was Ioffe. He came into contact with psychoanalysis as a young medical professional, although as a patient he was necessarily in opposition and thus introduced a faint note of skepticism into his psychoanalytic propaganda.

Trotsky's own attitude to the Freudians was similarly charged with contradictions: "Their combination of physiological realism and almost artistic analysis of psychic phenomena has always surprised me." He seems to have mastered, thanks to Ioffe, the terminology of psychoanalysis. In turn, Trotsky wrote, "In exchange for the lessons in psychoanalysis, I taught Ioffe the theory of permanent revolution and the necessity of breaking with the Mensheviks." At the time, psychoanalytic therapy was intensive, requiring five or six sessions a week, and thus it was expensive. Evidently, Adler was not paid out of the Party treasury for his services to Ioffe; Ioffe, the son of a rich Crimean merchant, paid for his own sessions. We do not know the duration of his therapy, but in 1912 Ioffe was arrested and sent to prison in Siberia, where he remained until February 1917. Then he and Trotsky met again. Trotsky recalled:

> Being elected to the Petersburg Duma, Ioffe became the leader of the Bolshevik faction. I did not expect it and, in the chaos of events, hardly had time to feel glad for my Viennese friend and pupil. When I

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> had already become Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, Ioffe came to Smolny to speak on behalf of the Duma Bolshevik faction. To tell the truth, I felt rather nervous for him by force of habit. However, he started to speak in such a calm and confident tone that all my fears disappeared. The large audience in Smolny's White Hall saw on the platform an imposing, dark-haired man with a broad, thick beard and graying hair, the very picture of sedateness and confidence.

Trotsky, an expert speaker himself, went on to praise the thirty-four-year-old Ioffe's delivery, his deep velvety voice, fluent speech, fine gestures; his ability to move easily from small talk to true pathos in his oratory. Recollecting it all in faraway Mexico, Trotsky could not help emphasizing that a striking metamorphosis had taken place in his friend:

> It was a pleasant surprise: revolution cured his nerves better than psychoanalysis. . . . Revolution has raised and straightened him out, consolidating the better traits of his intellect and character. Only sometimes, in the deep of his pupils, did I perceive excessive, almost frightening concentration. . . . In a gentle voice, with a pleasant smile, he always advanced the most decisive arguments for an armed uprising. In the hard days and hours . . . he was the most reserved, never losing his temper, always keeping his head in the midst of chaos. . . .

It is difficult to judge to what extent Ioffe's philosophy, both Bolshevist and Judaic, was congenial to Adler. I rather think that a psychoanalyst would strive to recognize the effects of this philosophy of the infinite on the patient's life and then to bring him to the frail and finite human reality. If Adler had related Ioffe's clinical symptoms of neurosis to his philosophy, I believe, he would have been sure that his patient was incurable. Trotsky, however, knew and understood Ioffe's philosophy. But later, speaking over his friend's grave and recognizing how contagious for Ioffe's adherents his example might be, he warned them: "Let no one dare imitate this veteran fighter in his death – imitate him in his life!"

Trotsky's youthful romancing alternated with revolutionary pragmatism. The old life was hateful, and the new one must be controlled: "Communist everyday life will not be shaped blindly, like coral reefs, but will be constructed consciously, checked against thought, monitored and corrected. Having ceased to be spontaneous, the everyday life will cease to be stagnant." And having remade nature, would man then hesitate to remake himself? Trotsky's response was: "We can build a railway through the whole of the Sahara, construct the Eiffel Tower, and talk to New York without using wires. Can it be that we cannot remake man? But of

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course we can! To make the new man is the immediate goal of Communism." The train of Trotsky's thought made Freudianism a natural extension of Marxism, just as Freudianism likewise was a refinement of generalized scientific thinking. Trotsky placed psychoanalysis:

> [within] the trend of development. Man first banished dark elements from production and ideology, replacing barbarous routine with science-based technology, and religion with science. Next he banished the unconscious from politics, turning monarchy and classes over to democracy, and rational parliamentarism, and finally to completely transparent Soviet dictatorship. The most burdening were the blind elements in economic relations, and thence man must eradicate them with an economy that is organized according to socialism. And finally, in the deepest and darkest corners of the unconscious, the elemental, the subterranean, there is hiding the nature of man itself. Is it not clear that this is where we must direct the greatest efforts of investigating thought and creative initiative?

In 1923, Trotsky attended a lecture by Pavlov. Pavlov had just returned from a lecture tour in the West, for which he had been given special permission to leave the country, after he made a personal appeal to Lenin. In the lecture, Pavlov announced that he could not understand how the lofty goals of the Bolsheviks could be achieved by workers whose ignorance even they admitted. Nor could he understand how the Bolsheviks could give the highest priority to achieving world revolution and at the same time completely undervalue and underfund scientific and academic laboratories. Both Trotsky and Bukharin took note of Pavlov's criticisms. Bukharin published two articles upbraiding him, but he did not advocate punishing Pavlov, since the Bolsheviks needed "the new science" to reinforce the cultural revolution they envisioned.

Trotsky sent a private letter to Pavlov in response to the lectures, suggesting in a tone of utmost respect that the Pavlovian physiology of conditioned reflexes be united with Freudian psychoanalysis. Trotsky noted that he was an amateur on the subject, while dwelling on his personal acquaintance with the Freudians in Vienna. Trying to prove the compatibility of the two most important doctrines of the century, Trotsky observed elsewhere:

> Both Pavlov and Freud believe that the "bottom" of the soul is physiology. But Pavlov acts like a diver, descending to the bottom and painstakingly examining the well upwards, while Freud is standing above, trying with his keen eye to see or guess the outline of the bot-

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> tom through the thickness of continuously troubled, dark water. . . . The attempt to declare psychoanalysis incompatible with Marxism and without ceremony turn our backs on Freudianism is too simple or, rather, simple-minded. By no means, however, should we adopt Freudianism.

As far as we know, Trotsky did not receive a reply from the seventy-four-year-old Pavlov, although Bukharin did manage to win his favor. For Trotsky, "Socialist construction was . . . a conscious, planned construction . . . a striving to rationalize human relations . . . to place them under the command of reason armed with science." At the time, he thought that conditions around the world were ripe for it: "Productive forces have long ago matured for socialism. . . . What is still missing is the final subjective factor: that mind is lagging behind life." Clearly, those who made the Revolution were faced with the fact that the new society had been created, but that people could not live it. Those who first faced up to the impossibility of living the Revolution dealt with the contradiction by withdrawing and letting the people live as best they could. This tended to be Lenin's way. Another was to artificially select those who were prepared to live in the new society, eliminating the rest of the people. This method is linked to Stalin and the gulags.

Trotsky seemed to have been looking for a third way – the most ambitious and romantic, logical and unrealizable. Since the people were not capable of living in the new society, they should be transformed. But how? Marxism was of no use because it had not predicted the situation. The reality called for some risky sidestepping. Trotsky's works of the twenties suggest that he genuinely believed the most advanced science would point toward the philosopher's stone for universal happiness. He had set himself the task of mediating between Pavlov and Freud, of both allying himself with the victorious party and taking on the advancement of *homo sapiens*. No wonder some thought him haughty!

In the meantime, the first professional psychoanalysis that had developed in Russia's Silver Age was reborn. In Moscow in 1923, the International Psychoanalytic Society renewed its activities, and the State Psychoanalytic Institute was founded. I. D. Ermakov became the head of both organizations, and A. R. Luria was their Scientific Secretary. In the recently opened archive of M. I. Ermakova, there are records about the Institute and the children's boarding school laboratory that was attached to it. Vera Schmidt (wife of O. Schmidt, then Director of the State Publishing House) was headmistress of the school and an active member of the Psychoanalytic Society. The majority of the children brought up in this institution were described as "children of Party officials who are giv-

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ing all their time to responsible party work and cannot bring up their children themselves." The Institute was given a wonderful place to carry on its activities, the Ryabushinskys' manor. Beginning in 1922, the boarding school received financial aid and food supplies from the German Union of Workers of the Mind and the Hands. Years later, Luria recalled that when he was twenty-one he had at the Institute "a magnificent office, with walls papered in silk." On the second floor of the Institute, in the Psychoanalytical Kindergarten, were, as Luria puts it, the children of important persons, including a son of Stalin. In accordance with the philosophy of the Institute:

> . . . in order for the child to freely express himself, an atmosphere here of full confidence and mutual respect between the children and the adults should be created. . . . A child's growth is effected through restriction in value of the pleasure principle to the benefit of the reality principle. The restriction, however, should be accomplished by the child and result not in the feeling of his own weakness but rather of his mastering a conscious achievement.

The Institute laboratory did not take long to accomplish these purposes; it was liquidated in 1925.

The editor of *Krasnaya Nov,* the Bolshevik A. K. Voronsky, was very critical of psychoanalysis and judged "the Marxist and seemingly Marxist non-party circles of the intelligentsia" to be especially susceptible to it. Yet the Party circles themselves were quite interested in psychoanalysis. Luria observed that "interest in psychoanalysis's challenges was demonstrated by such persons as Karl Radek and others." By "others" the cautious Luria most probably meant Trotsky. In the first decade after the Revolution, I. D. Ermakov managed to have published many volumes that became the Psychoanalytical and Psychological Library. For Russian readers today, these translations are still the main source on psychoanalysis. Currently, a number of new publications of them have been issued. At the same time as Trotsky's political defeat, the work of Soviet psychoanalysts was curtailed. By the late 1920s, anti-Freudian and anti-Trotskyist propaganda shared the pages of Party journals. It was a time when ideological labels, later familiar to every Russian schoolchild, were affixed everywhere. It was a time when the translations of Freud's work that had been made by Ermakov were banished to special library collections – and only very recently have they appeared again. So it was that when I was a student in the Department of Psychology at the University that fully deserved its name, "Zhdanov," Freud's works were almost as impossible to find as those of his hapless Soviet patron, Trotsky.

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Poems

CHARLES WRIGHT

Yard Work

I think that someone will remember us in another time,
Sappho once said – more or less –,
Her words caught
Between the tongue's tip and the first edge of the invisible.

I hope so, myself now caught
Between the edge of the landscape and the absolute,
Which is the same place, and the same sound,
That she made.

Meanwhile, let's stick to business.
Everything else does, the landscape, the absolute, the invisible.
My job is yard work –
I take this inchworm, for instance, and move it from here to there.

DONALD HALL

Stephen's Wrist

When I first taught college,
at twenty-eight, I was wheat to be
ground in anyone's mill. At my desk,
girls leaned over papers
so that their breasts touched
my tweedy shoulder; I walked home trembling
to drink Bourbon. Or I remember
my student Stephen who
showed up one afternoon at five,
just as I ended office
hours, to show me his bandaged

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wrist. "They let me out," he told me,
"so that I could catch you
before you left." Whisky that evening
allowed me cynicism:
Stephen slashed his wrist for show-and-tell.
But two years afterward
I learned that Stephen had hanged himself
in his grandmother's cellar
at Charlevoix; and some of the
girls, I found out later, really
took their clothes off and lay down.

The Turning Point

When I came home for Christmas
in my Junior year, my girlfriend
from Simmons wrote me a note:
She'd had her period. Of course
my mother read the letter
and my father with a broad smile
– anxious, loving, terrified –
suggested we have a talk.
One
thing, he said to begin with,
I mustn't go back to Boston
for the New Year's party . . .
In the soapopera script of our
lives, it was A Turning Point.
I knew it; he knew it: We played
our roles out: Our hearts
thudded; tears cornered our eyes; we shouted.
I Dug In My Heels;
He Lost His Composure – telling me that,
if I went to the party,
I would be kicking my mother's body.
They drove me to Boston
– reproach by kindness – and next
morning at breakfast,
after two hours' sleep, I was filial
and affectionate, tired,
happy, smelling love on my fingers.

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WILLIS BARNSTONE

Federico in August

You were never calm
like the orange trees of glass in La Huerta,
in the sun,
and every terror, Federico García, went
into your poems.

You hid upstairs in
the Rosales house within sight of the police.
You had a radio
with word of arrests, executions. It played
nationalist marches.

When the blueshirts
came, you were lost. They told Rosales lies
at the station.
Falla came too late. By the next morning
when that devout

Catholic composer pleaded
for your life with the governor Valdés Guzmán,
Valdés said he'd
look into the situation but already had the
report of your death

along with the Republican
teacher and two anarchist bullfighters, all
of you handcuffed
together at Ainadamar (Fountain of Tears)
where shots exploded.

Valdés had decided
to give you plenty of coffee, meaning lead,
and the blueshirts
obeyed. After the volley you got an extra
bullet in the ass

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for being a queer.
The Fountain of Tears has a grove of olive
trees. It was dawn
1936 when Spain lost its hand and you lay
by the dim roadside.

GEORGE KALOGERIS

Solomos at Zakynthos

When I saw my island for the first time
truly, I had just returned from Padua,
prize student of Rossi, confidant of Manzoni
and Monti, already well known for my *sonettas,*
and the elegy I delivered at Foscolo's grave;
but I paused for a moment by a wine shop doorway
and listened to a beggar sing. Old and blind,
he was singing in my native tongue, very softly,
when those common but lovely melodies
led me away from the language of Dante,
and I saw my island for the first time:
ochre-colored hills along the Ionian
when the noon light cradles rocky Zakynthos.
It was then I chose to write in my mother tongue
and not because, as they say, I heard the cannons
of Missolonghi, so close across the bay,
or that I succumbed to pleas of the philhellenes,
still clamoring for a national bard.
I was moved by the struggle but not by its language
until, on the way to my calling, I paused to hear
a folk song from my childhood, and I whom Goethe
would call "young Byron of Greece" stood like a boy
notching his height on a frame, measuring myself
against the blind singer of a wine shop doorway.

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CAROL FROST

Laws

She knows of doom only what all women know,
deciding not to speak of it, since speech pretends
its course can be made to bend: – someone fleeing hot and sweating
and the victors close behind, then two roads all at once in a wood. Which
one leads
farther away? Under cover of silence
she goes along as if perhaps nothing would happen to her,
seeming to be swayed by breezes – dazed, her friends say in their concern,
after, when they've thought of it, having called or dropped by.
Once, though, late in her illness, in the heat of a morning walk,
she raises her wig and shows us this surge of white back from the
forehead. The tablets
Moses carried, with his guesses, in the end could not have been more
blinding or more lawful.

LUCIEN STRYK

Shrine of the Crane
(Yamaguchi, Japan)

Once, far back in time, moving
as slow shadows in a mime by
the stone lanterns, chipped,

discolored now, processions
of shrine maidens, vestal sprigs
crossed at their breasts, led

by stiff-robed priests, black
lacquered clogs tap-tapping on
the path, filed by worshippers

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under red *toris,* up the stone steps,
passing three fox shrines aflush
with offerings, coins, ricecakes,

twigs embroidered with a paper-twist
of prayer. Today those hungry
ghosts with lofty dreams have fled

the hum of useless prayer on prayer,
to get ahead, outstrip, outdo,
all dreams lost somewhere in the fold

of time, deaf to the song of cranes.

CHRISTOPHER JANE CORKERY

The Chosen

Child, whose mother gives you up
Now into another's arms,
You will find your second home
Stunning in its swathe of love.

But, *Who was it,* you'll come to ask,
Who carried me on shining water?
What dark muscle was the wall
Between my self and earth's pain?

Mother, Father, love me dearly,
On this path they are my guides.
But, who was that who first was world?
Who fed me yellow drops of light?

Life's wild country is more seen
Each day by me, omnivore.
Barranca, prairie, bricked-up alley –
Which was the landscape that she wore?

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Memory, they say, cannot
Reach where mine has always gone.
Fingers stroke my brow and lips.
First light is equal to the song

Sung to me when I emerged,
First a shudder, then that breath.
I walk in company, all life long,
With her whose loss was my first death.

VALERI BRAININ-PASSEK

Dialogue

Your dust is here, but not your spirit.
– Dershavin

I went by streetcar to the morgue.
The heat was Biblical.
And I could not understand at all –
Where is she, who had lived?
She must be somewhere,
That I knew, not knowing where she was,
Who yesterday had been here,
On this side of the tunnel.

Things floated around my head.
Fluff from a poplar tree, I thought.
But some unearthly voice
Troubled my confused ear.
I knew well that I would die
And so would prove
To the one who whispers: "Nothing moves
Without leaving its trace,

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Nobody just goes . . ."
The materialist, slipping into a trance,
I muttered: Nonsense, foolishness! –
And shook my mortal head.
And so we conversed
While clouds drifted over, the streetcar
Smelling of grass –
Warm, young, alive – and tar.

Peacefulness all around.
I went to collect her things,
To have the funeral papers
Signed and sealed.
They solemnly brought me her
Coat, and dress, and underwear,
And then I could see
What existence amounts to.

I signed for those rags.
It took the greatest strength.
And of Him, who took her,
I prayed for healing tears,
But found neither tears nor words
That I was ready to accept,
To muddy *my* soul
In the astral blue depths.

Translated from the Russian by Don Share and Deborah Cohen

MARTIN EDMUNDS

November

The sun, bedded in mud,
hugging charred straw.

Through the chill wet,
a red-winged blackbird's orange epaulette.

That gashed coal catches.
The tinder glints.

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Along the fens
reflecting Boston in a smoky lens,

dead reeds and glass sappers
through which the sucked blood comes.

The last wasp hums
in a bucket.

Bleached weeds sour
between a frost and a thaw.

I see, green-cheeked, needy,
how you'll come back to me.

WILLIAM LOGAN

The High Summer of Capital

The silhouettes of snuffling chimneys
carve another cold snap in the capital.
Pale models bare their ribboned lingerie

against the stage's coil of cigar smoke
like otters roiling on their backs
in the black waters of the Severn.

This septic isle
collapses like a painted house of cards.
The season dyes the bland beautiful mouths,

and like burst cherries in the market stall
the yellow wasps feed on them in their frenzy.
The quiet rustle of legal envelopes

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attracts the gargoyles of the stock exchange,
and what submits to the ordinary will
returns as a sadistic itch to power,

as politicians run to gleaming fat
who find religion in a pastry shop.
Their Marx still loathes the ragweed of democracy.

Outside the pubs, black-booted skinheads lounge,
their shaved heads maggot-white, like billiard balls.
The living hand our elephantine priest

once raised against the prophets of the east
is raised again, like Christ the gaff-hooked fish.
The spawn come mewling their sweet gibberish.

ROBERT RICHMAN

First Light

Sometimes it is the hardest light of all,
When we resemble no one we have seen.
These sleepers lying pinioned in the dark
Are found out by this penetrating glow
That hustles off night's violet residue.

The light that blends the features of the land,
First disequilibrizes, then disbands.
Yet if the sleepers wait, the midday light,
Which separates the ocean from the sand,
Tries to undo what dawn insists is true.

At night, their soft light-falling words conceal
The doubt brought on by unrelenting dawn.
But soon their parting fingers will retrace
Their dreams' dark edge as they prepare for day,
And all the pain in its dividing gleam.

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VLADIMIR LEVCHEV

Four Seekers of the Great Metaphor

I.

He understood that words are living beings.
He dwelled among them and with a priest's fervor
helped them love one another and lie down in nuptial metaphor.
He aimed to unite them in holy societies . . .
But away from the pure fields of his temperate parish
he lacked the ruggedness to bear the savage,
sweating bodies – in that tropical country
each holy impulse burns like a useless sheet of paper . . .
While here among his yellowed manuscripts he was the doctor
to whom the skeleton is dearer than the man.

II.

He rejected empty words. He loved the fullness
of wineglasses, women's breasts, town squares.
He knew that here on earth, and not in heaven,
one must undergo the great metaphor.
Life alone has meaning! Paper is empty!
Live and drink – breasts, liquor, bright skies, sour cherries!
He drank up his days, sucked his memories dry,
then emptying his hopes, drank still more out of boredom . . .
At last, awake and sober, he realized: Yesterday I killed –
and his life-verses were a metaphor of death.

III.

He didn't think about his bread or distract his mind with wine,
he himself was the bread and wine of life.
He didn't sacrifice his time to books,
he himself was a read and doomed innocence . . .
He signed his name in heaven with his crucified flesh,
he crossed out death, illuminating it with human sense,
he made out of his own flesh and blood a metaphor
to sow goodness in barbarian fields . . .
If you cast the merchants out of your inconstant spirit,
the man in you, though crucified, will still live on.

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IV.

Sometimes His eye is like a moon
that fills our darkness with maternal sorrow.
Sometimes, blinded by His anger,
soaked in a sweat of thought, we lug our mortal burdens.
Sometimes a star will burn above the sunset
and an eternal secret breathe in tired forests . . .
Just as each parish deserves its priest
and each wine smells of the winemaker's soul,
and the kingdom is a wayward dream that troubles the king
at night, so the landscapes around us portray their Master.

Translated from the Bulgarian by Lisa Sapinkopf and Georgi Belev

BINYO IVANOV

The Wind is Coming and I Love You

The wind is coming and I love you,
dawn lifts an arm, the sunset fades,
a cloud is drying and I love you.

You, sunstruck dust-speck, droplet
dripping from a roof-tile's beard,
a single letter from a letter from a friend,
a maiden's lip, a mother's grief.

A pale, pale old man sits on his fur hat.
On three Balkan mountain bears he stalked,
on three Balkan mountain bears he skinned,
to have it growl on his uncombed head
in his eternal wars with vermin.

Yantra-fish crawl from the Yantra toward the Danube
where fish in bulging nets speak
thirty-three languages.

Translator's Note: Binyo Ivanov's poem, one of the most widely anthologized in Bulgaria, is understood as a love poem to the country.

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A gold-bearded she-goat climbs
Mt. Musela's rib,
clouds butt against her horns,
dying to set the sea on fire . . .

The wind is coming and I love you,
a cloud is drying and I love you,
I'm scattered by a surging
in your lakes – a dream beneath my palms,
by the udder of your grass,
by the roosters on burning roofs,
by chimneys that scrawl
long greetings on your skies.
The wind is coming and I love you,
a cloud is drying and I love you,
when I lie down I embrace you whole,
you, dust-speck that entered my eye
for a tear, sun that lights my road.

Translated from the Bulgarian by Lisa Sapinkopf and Georgi Belev

ROBERT B. SHAW

12:00 M

High summer pauses overhead.
Taking a breather in its climb,
the sun neglects to mark the time.
The faintest shadow of its tread
has vanished with the morning breeze.
A static hush prevails. The trees

are hulks of leafage, unimpelled.
The heavy earth's hot atmosphere
has fluttered to a standstill here,
a single breath drawn in and held
as though in wonder or in fright,
looking down now from some great height.

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How can a moment be this slow?
The whole yard clenches in suspense.
Then, from a weed clump by the fence,
a cricket chirps a signal: Go.
And the gold marcher, none too soon,
steps down from noon to afternoon.

MARK RUDMAN

Postscript: An Elegy

To the memory of James Schuyler

The world flares after a death:
flowers, railings, cracks in the pavement;
the impalpable spaces between things and people; the wind
tearing into the branches on the avenue; the river wind
that knows how to turn a corner; the early spring sun
that seems to be just stretching, warming up,
like a cat arching its back on a high windowledge;
the sound of the river lapping at the pilings
in the boat basin; the rainbowing oil below
the weir; the crowd's wayward, jaunty stride,
giving in to the idleness as they stroll
the promenade in Riverside Park
this Sunday, or linger over coffee
at the Pertutti, or pore over
avocados in the bins of the Korean markets;
or stand, like my friend, trowel
in hand, sun full on her face
in the flower garden open to everyone,
not who they are for a few moments
but what they are –
Sunny. Windy. 56 degrees.
The trees just in flower. A matter of days.

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C. DALE YOUNG

Sunday Afternoon

Beyond the strings of water
clinging to the windowpane,
there were no cranes, just rain,
a sky blurred through wet glass,
a pond corrugated by raindrops,

and inside: the smell of naphthalene bars,
a rotting Victrola with a broken arm,
a spotty daguerreotype, dusty crinoline –
O mildewed, seersucker suits
draped over forgotten chairs!

KAY RYAN

Outsider Art

Most of it's too dreary
or too cherry red,
If it's a chair, it's
covered with things
the savior said
or should have said –
dense admonishments
in nail polish
too small to be read.
If it's a picture,
the frame is either
burnt matches glued together
or a regular frame painted over
to extend the picture. There never
seems to be a surface equal
to the needs of these people.

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Their purpose wraps
around the backs of things
and under arms;
they gouge and hatch
and glue on charms
till likable materials –
apple crates and canning funnels –
lose their rural ease. We are not
pleased the way we thought
we would be pleased.

SELWYN PRITCHARD

Dear Kate, kind daughter

I remember mad joy, seeing the sulphur lights
bloom one by one on his hearse, that he was
coming back to us again, our little boy . . .

In snow-flake silence of the December dawn
in the empty chapel we reached out to him,
but seemed only to push him down:
deus ex machina
hummed assent; flame annealed him, made a memorial:
a curb like that which killed him . . .
He has been
alone so long, so far away: his Autumn our Spring,
his cold night our warm day, but the bulbs you planted
bloom, you say, and year upon year daffodils and crocus
will bring their solace from that artless earth.

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Books

Brodsky's Venice

WATERMARK. By Joseph Brodsky. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $15.00.

Since the publication of his 1986 collection *Less Than One,* Joseph Brodsky has continued to develop his mastery of an idiosyncratic form that defies literary genre. Brodsky's prose pieces superficially resemble familiar or critical essays, but they lack the clarity and analytic pointedness one expects from those forms. Willfully opaque and meandering, they often leave more music and texture than the sense of an argument understood. Their structures invisible, Brodsky's nonfiction writings veer often into aphorism and apostrophe, as they mine autobiographical and philosophical veins tenuously related to the topic at hand.

So it is with *Watermark,* a slim volume whose intent seems not so much to propound a thesis as to complicate and deepen an intellectual relationship, creating dazzling plays of metaphor and paradox in the process. Brodsky's is a murky, beautiful, frustrating work, which draws the reader closer to his subject without attempting definitive judgements, or really any judgement about it at all. Simultaneously absorbing and elusive, it is a literary hybrid that may be best appreciated if thought of as a kind of thematic prose-poem, or a dramatic monologue, rather than an essay.

Venice, as Mary McCarthy commented, is a phenomenon about which "the rationalist mind has always had its doubts." Her own novella-length essay on the subject, *Venice Observed,* however, constitutes an effort to see what the rationalist mind can do with the city after all. Brodsky, on the other hand, goes with the flow of the place. There is little to say about Venice as urban curiosity that has not been said already, and he is not interested in matching art-historical or architectural wits with Ruskin and Bernard Berenson (though he does steal a line from Prince Charles, blaming modern architects for doing "more harm to the European skyline than any Luftwaffe"). Rather, Brodsky uses the city as departure points for a series of watery meanderings. "If I get sidetracked," he writes, "it is because getting sidetracked is literally a matter of course here and echoes water."

Those anticipating a kind of exalted travel book, the kind a Nobel laureate might toss as a bouquet to his fans, will be disappointed. Brodsky fails to even note most of those sights beloved of tourists and neglects as

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well the city's politics, economics, cultural life, even its currently consuming questions of conservation. Nor does he make an effort to capture its indigenous social milieu, which is largely closed-off to short-term visitors. McCarthy made much of the materialism and matter-of-factness of the Venetians. But Brodsky's only discussion of the city's habitants is his brief aside that "no tribe likes strangers, and Venetians are very tribal."

The sole Venetian characters in his book appear almost as ghosts. The first is a minor aristocrat, "the umpteenth," who throws a party crashed by the author in a mildewed palazzo. Brodsky's *discursus* on the gala neglects the guests for the putti, and it wanders off into a meditation on time and space. The only other local in his account is not a native Venetian at all, but an American, Olga Rudge, Ezra Pound's widow, whose flat Brodsky visits with his friend Susan Sontag. Rudge feeds him tea and "garbage" and reminds him of the old CP members he dealt with as a young dissident in the Soviet Union. But she too is an anachronism, less meaningful to Brodsky than the lifeless stones – which bring him closer to the ethereal realm he seeks.

What, we might ask, draws him to the city? Brodsky credits his visits to "visual reasons." He calls Venice "the city of the eye," and again a place where the body "starts to regard itself as merely the eye's carrier." But physical beauty, though often noted, seems a happenstance, rather than that which the poet seeks in his sojourns. Brodsky is purposeful in limiting his visits to winter, during which the days are short and the clouds hang low. This is not just a strategy for avoiding German tourists. It is during this "abstract season," as he calls it, when things are paradoxically at their most real. Venice, where Brodsky has been traveling each winter for almost twenty years, becomes a way for this self-described "cardiac cripple" to transcend the confines of the body. Venice in winter is for him a head-clearing experience, a catalyst for deeper thoughts.

Brodsky's most pungent descriptions are often metaphorical inversions: concrete things articulated through comparison to incorporeal ones. Arriving for the first time, he writes: "The boat's slow progress through the night was like the passage of a coherent thought through the subconscious." Opening a window on Sunday, his room is flooded with a "pearl-laden haze, which is part damp oxygen, part coffee and prayers." Through the book, Venice itself appears as a dream or a reflection rather than a solid presence. And the author is a dreamer within a dream. Venice is a city to which for years he has been returning "or recurring in it, with the frequency of a bad dream." This conceit helps explain the book's apparent lack of direction. If dreams were a genre, Brodsky cracks, "their main stylistic device would doubtless be the non sequitur."

Thus the author seems as much a connoisseur of the idea of Venice as

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of the city itself. He describes the place almost as if it were one of Italo Calvino's magical, invisible cities. The only thing better for his purposes than a city built on water would be a city built on air, as he paraphrases Hazlitt. The Venice he loves is both the real city and the unreal one that lends itself to transcendent thoughts. The deepest theme of his essay is the passage from the real to the unreal, from the physical to the metaphysical.

Brodsky's distinctive, unidiomatic English, which reveals and conceals at the same time, is particularly appropriate to his task. Unlike Nabokov, whose adoptive language aimed to dazzle with its fluent precision, Brodsky's remains contentedly foggy. When a term sticks in his head, he repeats it more times than conventional style allows, and he relies heavily on figures of speech – "not to say," "not to mention," "better yet" – to connect his peregrinations. At the same time, he is wonderfully inventive, devising collective nouns like "a parthenon of candles" or the "kremlin of drinks" he imagines upon a table. This vernacular, too, reflects his theme; his meanings shimmer just beneath the cloudy surface of his writing.

It is in this context that Brodsky's title begins to make sense. At one level, his is a book about the actual Venice, a city which is marked by water, both historically and aesthetically. But at another level, Brodsky is writing about the watermark familiar to stamp collectors, a translucent image imbedded in paper, which becomes visible to the naked eye only when it is held up to the light or wetted. Venice for him is such an emblem; it is a physical dimension containing a metaphysical essence; a place where what goes unseen becomes visible, upon immersion in the author's own depths.

Jacob Weisberg

Return to Africa

AFRICAN LAUGHTER: Four Visits to Zimbabwe. By Doris Lessing. HarperCollins. $25.00.

The Republic of Zimbabwe came into existence in 1980, after a protracted war between the black nationalist guerrillas and the whites who had previously ruled the country. The first white settlers, almost all of whom were of British stock, had arrived ninety years before, attracted mainly by stories of the immense quantities of gold which the country was supposed to contain. These stories turned out to be false; nothing was found there that could compare in size and importance with the gold fields of neighboring South Africa. Agriculturally, however, the country

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was a rich one; its climate was healthy; and even if its reserves of precious metals were more meager than the pioneers had hoped, it did contain some unglamorous mineral deposits (chrome, asbestos, coal) which were worth exploiting. The country was also extraordinarily beautiful: it had high, rain-soaked mountains along its eastern borders, the mighty Victoria Falls in the west, and wooded, rolling plains across the central plateau, studded with domes and boulders of granite. An additional attraction was that its herds of game were immense, even by African standards, when the whites first appeared.

And the indigenous peoples? In the 1890s they twice rose up in "rebellions" against their new masters. Both uprisings were crushed mercilessly. Thereafter, until the outbreak of the war of liberation in the late 1960s, the blacks of Southern Rhodesia – as the country was then called – seemed to be remarkably accepting of their lot: more so, indeed, than their fellow blacks further south ever were. Their apparent docility was especially striking, in view of the fact the country's white population remained tiny: at its highest, just after the Second World War, it consisted of not much more than a couple of hundred thousand people. In those days Southern Rhodesia had the status of a "self-governing" British colony, which meant that the white minority ruled it untrammeled by interference from London, and that the ninety-five per cent of the population who were black had no control whatever over any aspect of their lives. The colonists had seized more than half of Rhodesia's pastoral and arable lands; they also had imposed heavy "hut" and "poll" taxes on the blacks to ensure a plentiful supply of cheap labor for themselves. Generally they regarded the Africans with a degree of indifference (at best) and contempt (at worst) that astonished me when I first encountered it. (Yes, I was then a visitor from notoriously racist South Africa; but the distance between the white masters and black servants seemed to me greater in the "enlightened" British Rhodesia than anything I had ever seen before.)

It was within this small, philistine, yet energetic white community, full of a blinkered pride in its own achievements and convinced of its inalienable right to rule, that Doris Lessing grew up and lived as a young adult. It was from its "provincial and tedious" culture, as she now describes it in *African Laughter,* that she fled to London at the age of thirty, taking with her the manuscript of her first novel, *The Grass Is Singing.* In 1956 she returned on a visit to the country. By then she was already an established writer with well-known "leftist" views; hence she was an object of deep suspicion to the Rhodesian government, which was itself feeling the pressures of the era of decolonization begun elsewhere on the African continent. Moved by a mixture of fear, arrogance, and (I have no

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doubt) conviction that this mutinous young woman had betrayed her own people by writing a novel about the relations between a white woman and a black man, the authorities declared her to be a prohibited immigrant. At the time, she tells us here, she felt rather proud of having been thought important enough to have such a prohibition imposed on her. At least, that was how she felt during her daylight hours. At night, however, her dreams were filled for months afterward with grief and tears. How could this be? Had she not chosen to leave the country? Had not leaving it been a vital step towards transforming herself into the writer she wished to become? What was it that made her wake again and again from sleep, sorrowfully knowing "that I was excluded from my own best self"?

Obviously no direct answers to questions of that kind are available. Alternatively, one could say that the best possible answer to them is the present book. It tells the story of the four visits which Doris Lessing made between 1982 and 1992 to the country in which she grew up. It contains passages of writing – all of a directly personal and autobiographical nature – which are as passionate and sustained as any she has ever produced. In these she performs the difficult double feat of recreating places and episodes which had meant everything to her in her childhood and girlhood, while also, and simultaneously, presenting those places and recalling those episodes as the appear to her now, as a much-traveled and much-experienced visitor. In the process she reveals to the reader the unmistakable excitement of an imagination discovering about itself what is both most hidden and intimate, most painful and yet liberating, about its own workings. A similar compelling doubleness of vision is evident in her evocations of people whom she either summons from the grave or encounters again in the flesh after the lapse of more than a quarter of a century:

> About a hundred yards away inside the fence was a stout graying man I did not recognize, coming towards me. When I had last seen my brother he was young and good-looking. He stopped to peer at me. We stood at a distance, gazing, and our faces confessed everything.
>
> "Gosh," he said.
>
> "Well," was what I said.

Of course brother and sister soon find much more to say to each other than this; in fact they learn that they can speak more frankly and cordially together than they ever could in their often fractious childhood and youth. The author also finds that her brother has no recollection of some of her most precious childhood memories. She gives, for instance, a

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fiercely lyrical description of how the family would camp in the open veld when they came to visit him at his boarding school, and he would be allowed out to join them. Yet it is something he claims not to remember at all. By the same token she has to accept that he has equally intense, much-brooded-over memories of things that passed her by or she had never thought to ask him about before. Poignantly enough, later in the book, during the second of the visits described here, we learn also of her brother's death, shortly after that long-delayed reunion.

Between her last visit to white-ruled Rhodesia and her first visit to black-ruled Zimbabwe twenty-six years had passed: a period long enough to fill anyone, in almost any circumstances, with wonder, disbelief, a dismayed sense of the tenuousness of our hold on the world. In this case, though, the author's emotions are made even more intense by the fact that the country has undergone a transformation that had been almost impossible to imagine more than two decades before, even by those who most wished to see it happen. In the interim, history had in fact vindicated the judgment of the embattled few like herself, who had maintained that the position of whites would ultimately prove to be politically and morally untenable. Had that transformation not taken place she would indeed not have been able to make these successive visits.

Yet there is nothing gloating or self-righteous in her tone. First of all, however politically incorrect this may be, her feelings are marked by a rueful, admiring affection for the white colonists and the qualities of enterprise and ingenuity, courage and doggedness, which she knows them to possess. (The white population has today shrunk to a third of the size it once was.) They are truly her people, and remain her people, whether they wish it or not; with the older members of the farming community, in particular, she shares memories of a time when the unsullied veld teemed with birds and game, and when it was safe for an unaccompanied white girl to wander at will for miles across it. Secondly, she has no impulse to gloat over having been proved a true prophet because she has so acute a sense of the problems the country faces under its new rulers: hunger, overpopulation, homelessness, unemployment, crime, corruption and mismanagement at the top, and a degree of isolation and poverty at the bottom which she herself says it is impossible to convey to readers in the world's wealthier countries.

Sometimes, in her relief at being able at last to meet the black citizens of Zimbabwe on a basis of something like equality and mutual respect, the author shows a determined cheerfulness about aspects of life in Zimbabwe which her own accounts of it elsewhere seem to gainsay. Even the title of the book reveals something of this attitude. About the corruption to which the new ruling elite has succumbed so enthusiastically, for example, she says palliatingly that the sums involved are tiny compared

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with those at stake in recent major financial scandals in the developed world. This is true; but then Zimbabwe's economy is itself tiny compared with that of any developed country, so the remark tells us nothing about the extent to which the system as a whole is enfeebled and frustrated by the veniality of its politicians and officials. Again, though she repeatedly speaks of how deprived are many of the people in the rural areas, and how remote from them are the means of communication and the educational facilities that we in the "North" take for granted, she then muffles the effect by repeatedly having them speak to her and to us in a fluent, educated, grammatically correct, quasi-choric English – a mode of speech which to my ear is quite unlike what one will usually hear in such circumstances. She has many sharp words of scorn for the unravelling "socialist" pretensions of the country's official ideology; yet, like other visitors, she goes to some length to exculpate the president himself, Robert Mugabe, from the systematized hypocrisy which has always been the hallmark of his government.

Yet many of the political-reportorial vignettes in the book are acutely and genially observed; the author even manages to write in good-humored, unrepining fashion about a road accident in which she and her son, innocent parties both, suffered severe injuries. The greatest strength of the book, though, remains its contrapuntal balancing of the past against the present; of change against all she knows to be unreachable and unchanging; of the joys and anguish of youth against those of age and its burden of memories. Perhaps the most dramatic and affecting moments of the book are the twenty pages in which she describes how on the second of her four visits she finally goes back to her parent's farm, after overcoming profound fears and reluctances, and finds – what?

> I stood and looked out at "the view" which was why my parents had built the house where they did, and which fed their eyes and their hopes for all the years of being on that farm where nothing went as they wanted.
>
> It is beautiful. It was more beautiful than I expected, because of those inexplicable warnings from my brother. "Don't go back, it will break your heart." What had broken his heart? Soon I understood. Not that our old house was gone, for it had to, being built of mud and thatch. Not that they had cut off the top of "our" hill. No, it was the bush. It had gone. Where he had spent his childhood were indeterminable red fields, his bush – gone. . . .

> My brother and I used to take the rifle and walk through the bush

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to Ayreshire Hills, moving silently like the black people, having learned from them. . . . The big vlei on our farm, full of thorn trees, is as it used to be, but it is silent. . . . Everywhere in that bush were doves and go-away birds and other louries and above all that sorrowful enchanter the emerald spotted dove whose cry, the Africans say, sounds like, "My mother is dead, my father is dead, oh, oh, oh, oh."

Dan Jacobson

And Yet: The Prose of Max Jacob

HESITANT FIRE: SELECTED PROSE OF MAX JACOB. Translated and edited by Moishe Black and Maria Green. University of Nebraska Press. $30.00.

When Max Jacob died of pneumonia in the Nazi camp at Drancy on March 5, 1944, his friend Jean Cocteau had just written to the German Embassy in Paris: "I would say of Max Jacob that he is a great poet if it were not a redundancy: one should simply say poet, because poetry inhabits him and flashes from him, from his hand, without his even willing it." In 1938, the homages to Jacob published by the journal *Aguedal* included pieces by Gide, Claudel, Cocteau, and Stein. In 1932 he had been decorated as a "chevalier de la Légion d'honneur" for his services to literature. He was the great early friend of Apollinaire and Picasso, a founding member of the Cubist group at the Bateu Lavoir, and the acknowledged master of younger writers such as Michel Leiris and Edmond Jabès. And yet? And yet his time is coming only now, a half-century after his death. For years, he has been seen as a runner-up to Apollinaire's full-throated personal lyricism and to the narrative completion of Gide and Proust. *Hesitant Fire,* the new selection of his prose in English, could not have appeared at a more appropriate time.

He is indeed a disconcerting writer. Even a public attuned to Heine could be pardoned for balking at the ironies and dissonances in Jacob's lyrics; readers who followed Gide's *The Counterfeiters* could still be baffled by the mercurially shifting voices and perspectives in Jacob's fiction; partisans of the secular avant-gardes (many of whom, like Breton, learned a great deal from Jacob) could hardly stomach his almost medieval

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Catholicism. For years, in France, Jacob has been known to the general public for only one book, *The Dice Cup,* the collection of prose poems that redefined the genre in 1917. Outside of France he has hardly been known at all. But our own era, after two decades of training in narrative and lexical "subversion," may finally have learned to read this eccentric writer.

His techniques, at least, seem up-to-date. The novel *The Bouchaballe Property,* several sections of which appear in *Hesitant Fire,* appears tailor-made for Barthesian exposition: here is a truly de-centered, "plural" narrative, scathingly conscious of the way in which "property" generates meaning, with competing registers of dialogue, protean authorial personae, and multiple plot lines. Throughout Jacob's oeuvre even genres are scrambled and pressed to the limit: prose spills into poetry, memoir into fiction, confession into moral essay. His entire project seems designed to eliminate the ego and the class structures that support it: "There is no 'I'. There is a composite that knows not itself nor yet others." And yet (any explicator of Jacob is doomed to this recurrent phrase), Max Jacob has, finally, nothing in common with post-structuralist aesthetics. His experimentalism, his derangements of semantic, syntactic, and narrative orders, his probing of the unconscious, are all in the service of a mystical quest. For Jacob, a converted Jew, the Christian God was the center of reality, the only stable point of reference.

God – in the form of His Son – appeared to Jacob in a vision on the wall of his squalid room in Montmartre in 1909. From that time on, Jacob, intimate of Picasso, fabulous mimic, amateur Kabbalist and astrologer, homosexual Jew from Brittany, gouache painter and metapoetic magus, devoted his talent to revealing the delusions in all merely human orders (the police, the judiciary, marriage, master-servant relations, rhyme, the alexandrine line . . .) in the light of one transcendent love. In fact, the later work is a natural extension of the spiritualism and experimental tactics preceding the apparition. "Sometimes, often, with a flourish of the bow," wrote Gide of Max Jacob in 1938, "he lifts the veils from us, and we don't know what we're facing, whether it's ourselves, or God. 'Mystery in this life, reality in the other; if you love me, if you love me, I'll show you reality,' he says. That is why I love Max Jacob."

Moishe Black and Maria Green have clearly translated and edited their selections with love. In the chronological presentation, they have also provided a covert biography of this mesmerizing figure who helped invent modern French poetry, and whose life touched closely on the lives of most of the major artists, writers, and musicians who worked in France in this century. The editors' decision to offer Jacob's prose, rather than the poetry for which he is better known, is a piquant and brave one; the

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French public might benefit from a reading of this book. Finally, since Jacob is a supreme stylist and punster, the act of translation called for staggering verbal inventiveness and pliability, qualities which the translators have for the most part demonstrated. There are inevitably moments when the strain for a pun results in a deformation of idiom (" 'N'empêche –' 'Pêche!' " yields " 'I intend to have speech –' 'S . . . peach!' "). Occasionally, even without the pressure of a pun, the phrase rings strangely, as in "if she wants to keep my custom" for "si elle veut ma clientèle encore." One might also gently interrogate the decision to include the Breton songs from *The Coast* (1911) since in their lyrical structure they belong more to the history of *vers libre* than to prose. These are, however, small matters. On the whole, the translation has succeeded ingeniously.

The presentation of Jacob's prose emphasizes his role as social moralist, the heir of La Bruyère. Since his work delivers nothing less than a verbal portrait of the whole society of France in the Third Republic, the task demands an immense range of idiom and vocabulary. The first story, *The Story of King Kabul the First and Gawain the Kitchen Boy,* a school-prize book snapped up by a publisher in 1904, already hints at the social satire and collision of styles that will mark Jacob's mature work. The selection as a whole is generous enough to give a good idea of the stylistic discontinuities that Jacob employed as his working method, rather as Picasso and Braque used disjunctures in planes, perspective and volume in Cubist painting. *Hesitant Fire* reads like an encyclopedia of French idioms set deliberately clashing: from the cacophony of academic jargon, peasant dialogue, bourgeois locutions, bureaucratic legalese and inarticulate confession, rises an intimation of some primal logos sought in the bowels of the self after the social ego has been peeled away. "Almost the only thing I still like these days is this process of scraping away," Jacob wrote to a young poet in the letter included here. "No more stylistic geegaws. Tear yourself in half or else take the finished poem and tear that in half . . ."

Many readers will find the heart of the volume in the five sections from the sequence "Hospital Nights and Dawn" (1921). In these accounts drawn from Jacob's stay in a public hospital after an accident, all his major themes, spiritual and social, converge in a hallucinatory eloquence, and the primal logos becomes a death rattle, an animal howl. Here, in the democracy of pain and under the sway of institutional idiocy and indifference, is revealed the mystery of compassion, "the true understanding acquired from close proximity to mortal suffering." Here, too, are dramatized the collision between social order and subjectivity, and the fate of language betrayed into cliché, non-communication, and the arbitrary exercise of power. "Schwevischenbund, despite his delirium unaccompanied

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by fever, kept thanking everyone effusively and repeating his name and his mother's unmarried name to everyone who asked for information on these two points. It seemed to him that the duty of a man who has just been hurled violently into a completely new environment is to repeat his name and his mother' family name . . ."

While the narrator assumes various masks of linguistic disenfranchisement (that of a "Syrian" who cannot speak French and is treated for psychiatric disorder; and the imaginary "Schwevischenbund" whose name suggests someone with the doubly threatening hint of Germanness and Jewishness), the administrators perpetuate their tyranny: "The matron comes. The junior nurse confides her worries to the senior nurse. 'He coughs, does he? And what of it? So do I cough! Everybody coughs!' – And they write in the book of hours: 'The patients are quiet.' " The account reaches a crescendo in the apostrophe to the hospital itself, sitting, approximately, "Between two railroad stations," and in the vision of the dance of death: "Hey there, all you people rushing by in your cars, you're going to die, y'know! You're all going to die! Hey there, all you sex fiends, the young ones and the old, you're going to die! Women tied to your kitchens, you others who live in style, you bluestockings, you're all going to die, friends! . . ." These passionate, scintillating pages have caught mortal utterance in all its perversity, its contamination, its incipient grandeur. Let us hope this selection is a prelude to many more appearances of Max Jacob in English.

Rosanna Warren

Theories about Auschwitz

FROM WEIMAR TO AUSCHWITZ: ESSAYS IN GERMAN HISTORY. By Hans Mommsen. Princeton University Press. $29.95.
ARCHITECT OF GENOCIDE: HIMMLER AND THE FINAL SOLUTION. By Richard Breitman. Alfred A. Knopf. $23.00.

The question "How was Auschwitz possible?" gives twentieth-century German history much of its urgency and passion. In the two books under review here, Hans Mommsen and Richard Breitman offer contrasting yet in part complementary answers to this question. Readers whose familiarity with recent historiography of Nazi Germany is limited to reports of the *Historikersstreit*, the "historians' dispute" over the uniqueness and comparability of the Holocaust, will be relieved to learn upon reading these books that the moral compass of historians of German history remains intact, and that our knowledge of how Auschwitz was possible is

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growing.

One way of categorizing historians of the Nazi regime, first offered by the late British historian, Timothy Mason, was to distinguish between "intentionalists" and "functionalists." Like all dichotomies, this one had its share of caricature and simplification. Nevertheless, the intentionalists, such as Karl Bracher, Andreas Hillgrüber, and Eberhard Jaeckel in Germany, and Lucy Dawidowicz, Erich Goldhagen, George Mosse, and Fritz Stern in the United States focused on Hitler's ideology and intentions, the nature and depth of anti-Semitism, the interaction between Nazi racial ideology and World War Two, and the link between Hitler's ideology and public statements and the deeds of the Holocaust.

The West German functionalists, most importantly Martin Broszat, the director of the influential Institute for Contemporary History in Munich until his death two years ago, and Hans Mommsen, a prolific historian who wrote an important study of the civil service during the Third Reich, argued that bureaucratic confusion and overlapping competencies of the Nazi regime in 1941 allowed radical fanatics to come to the fore to implement the Holocaust. The functionalists worried that intentionalist focus on Hitler would obscure the culpability of the German military, foreign service, business leaders, and government bureaucrats. Mommsen's essay collection offers readers one of the fullest English-language presentations of the functionalist case. Previously, the historian Christopher Browning has done much to integrate ideas and institutions in the crucial decision-making months of 1941. Breitman's important study of Himmler makes the intentionalist point yet does so with an attention to the details of policy-making formerly associated with the functionalists.

From Weimar to Auschwitz, published in 1992, examines generational, cultural, and social conflict in the Weimar Republic; the politicians and civil servants of the last years of the Weimar era; Hitler's position in the Nazi system; the causes of the Holocaust; the nature of German resistance to Hitler; and the controversy over Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem.* In "The Decline of the Bürgertum in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," Mommsen stresses the fragmentation of the German educated middle classes, noting that it was intellectuals, especially primary and secondary school teachers, those left behind the prosperity of the German middle classes, who were most important for the right-wing anti-democratic and anti-Semitic movements and parties of the era. "Generational Conflict and Youth Rebellion in the Weimar Republic" examines the inability of Social Democracy to channel youth rebellion into democratic politics due to its bureaucratized and aging party leadership. Mommsen's critique of the bureaucratization of the SPD continues

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in "Social Democracy on the Defensive: The Immobility of the SPD and the Rise of National Socialism." He takes the Social Democrats to task for their defensiveness and legalism in the face of the rise of Nazism; their focus on the threat from the Communists; insufficient emphasis on the threat to the Weimar Republic from the right; stifling of debate and internal democracy within the party; and failure to extend the electoral base beyond the traditional working class, or to grasp the "social-revolutionary energy at the root of the KPD (the Communists) mass support." While the KPD attracted unemployed youth, the Nazis exploited the cult of the middle-class youth movements. The "deeper crisis" of Social Democracy and the labor movement in Europe was that it lost its character as a movement as it became a political party.

Mommsen's discussion recalls themes of the "extra-parliamentary" left of the 1960s, including its criticism of Social Democratic anti-Communism. Yet, as his own analyses of the crisis of the Republic demonstrate, the fault for Weimar's downfall lay far more in conservative hostility to democratic government in the crisis years of 1929 to 1933 than in the Social Democrats' efforts to defend democratic institutions. How could Social Democrats form a united front with Communists who were denouncing them as "social fascists"? How easily could they "integrate" young people whose radicalism lay, in large part, in rejection of parliamentary democracy?

"State and Bureaucracy in the Brüning Era" explores the relationship between the Prussian civil service and the authoritarian circumvention of the Reichstag by Heinrich Brüning, one of the last chancellors of the Weimar Republic. The politicization of the bureaucracy, a departure from its inherited traditions, weakened its will to resist Nazi illegality and facilitated accommodation to the Nazi regime after 1933. Mommsen argues that it was politicized officials rather than traditional Prussian authoritarians who helped create an opening for Nazism, a claim that must certainly be qualified, given the traditional authoritarians in the military and the foreign office who made their peace with the Nazis. The point, though, is well taken: Nazism was not primarily or mainly a continuation of old German authoritarianism.

In "Heinrich Brüning as Chancellor: The Failure of a Politically Isolated Strategy," Mommsen argues the final crisis of the Weimar Republic was not explicable "solely by reference to the actions of individual politicians," for they "merely executed the carefully planned designs of certain dominant social interests." Yet he then turns around to offer a detailed portrait of how Brüning the individual mattered very much, and why his policies were not explicable in terms of these "certain dominant social interests." Brüning squandered the opportunity to open his policies to broad discussion or build support among potential allies. He

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was unwilling to reveal his long-term plans on reparations and economic revival not only to the public but also to his government partners, thus losing the confidence of both. His methods served to strengthen the clique surrounding President Hindenburg, which was openly plotting an authoritarian strategy. Rather than turn to the firmest supporters of parliamentary institutions, the SPD, he encouraged those who thought that the Versailles Treaty and the November Revolution of 1918 were the cause of Germany's miseries. Mommsen judges Brüning harshly for undermining the spirit of the constitution and for escalating the economic crisis with deflationary policies. The harshness of his verdict implies that other policies were both desirable and possible, that the Nazi seizure of power was not an inevitable outcome of German history but rather the end product of a series of policy blunders by particular individuals, however shaped by social interests they were.

"Hitler's Position in the Nazi System" and "The Realization of the Unthinkable: The 'Final Solution' in the Politics of the Third Reich" lay out Mommsen's arguments about "cumulative radicalization" amidst bureaucratic confusion. Mommsen judges traditional elites harshly for falling victim to Hitler's charisma even though they had information "which could leave no doubt that Hitler's military rampage was propelling the entire nation towards total ruin." Why did they do so? In part because the regime's monopoly of information prevented people from reflecting soberly on their situation. Allied mass bombing and the demands of work absorbed individual energies in the tasks of day-to-day survival. General depoliticization of the population meant that criticisms of particular aspects of the regime did not develop into opposition to the regime itself. The Allied demand for unconditional surrender, anti-bolshevik indoctrination, and a complete lack of information led the public to conclude that survival depended on the success of the war effort. As Hitler's person came to symbolize the nation, disloyalty to him meant placing oneself outside the boundaries of the nation. Added to this was the threat of terror and concentration camps. In this situation, mass opposition was impossible. Criticism of the regime existed within its bureaucracies but was expressed in apathy and resignation and never cohered into a rejection of the regime as a whole nor included the person of Hitler. Mommsen stresses a point not yet sufficiently appreciated by non-experts. Unlike Communist-type organizations, the Nazi party did not possess a bureaucratically structured hierarchy or an internal organization modeled on the military. Rather it was a "competitive leadership system" which fostered freedom of action for individual leaders, all of whom were expected to adhere fanatically to the "unalterable" party program, and whose rivalries enhanced political mobilization and a radicalization of the regime.

Mommsen again stresses the extent to which the traditional elites be-

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came implicated in the regime's criminal policies because they abandoned their own traditions and were willing to keep pace with the radicalization of the regime "so as not to be circumvented or excluded altogether from the system." The Wehrmacht, for example, "effectively forfeited its moral claim to guardianship of Prussian tradition when it consented to waging a war of racial extermination against the Soviet Union." The result of the system was "a cumulative spiral of radicalization" among competing, uncoordinated ministries and authorities. Senior officials were "rarely consulted on matters of ongoing or planned policy" and were "usually badly informed" about the military situation and "measures being taken in the occupied territories."

Over time and in the midst of this confusion, Hitler and his immediate entourage "increasingly reverted to the original and fanatically utopian aims of the Nazi movement as their hold on reality slipped and they were gripped by a growing premonition of the military catastrophe facing the Reich. . . . As successive military defeats gradually undermined the euphoric faith in a German victory, the long-term ideological aims of national socialism came ever more to the fore in Hitler's tirades. There was never any shortage of loyal fanatics to diligently convert these into concrete measures and strategies." The Final Solution and the crimes committed in the war in the East could become political realities only when the highest decisions were made "without rational bureaucratic considerations playing any role whatsoever." Hitler approved the policy of extermination, but it could not have been implemented without the intense competitiveness for the Führer's favor which dominated the higher echelons of the regime and the "aimless perfectionism of the bureaucracy." Hence, the road to Auschwitz "was a process which involved numerous stages of escalation which only in retrospect appear as the systematic realization of a coherent plan." After 1945, it was understandable that the Hitler myth would reverse its function. Now he and his immediate associates were assigned all responsibility for the crimes and mistakes of the regime, while analysis of the structural origins was avoided.

Two essays on the German resistance to Hitler, especially "German Society and the Resistance to Hitler" are of particular interest. Mommsen points out that while practical politicians such as Adenauer and Heuss resigned themselves to complete passivity or believed that there was nothing they could do in the situation, the conspirators were rooted in conservative and religiously grounded morals. "They took a stand against the rule of absolute inhumanity personified by Hitler while the great majority of the nation and its elites stood passively by." Their morality and sense of responsibility fell outside the conventional categories of left and right.

Mommsen separates the collapse of Weimar, the Nazi seizure of power, and the Holocaust from any conception of inevitability and draws

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our attention to the contingencies and options facing individuals in each of these moments. Moreover, he rightly stresses that the Nazi regime, for all its criminality, was a government and that implementation of policy required the cooperation of many agencies, in addition to the inspiration of a fanatical leader. I think he is not sufficiently critical of the KPD in the late Weimar years, but he makes a strong case against Weimar's conservatives, recalling their culpability for making 1933 possible. Less convincing is his argument that a movement, the youth-oriented SPD, could have launched a political offensive on behalf of Weimar. Ironically, for an historian who criticizes explanations that focus excessively on the actions and beliefs of individuals, the cumulative answer of Mommsen's fine and provocative essays to the question "How was Auschwitz possible?" is that many, many individuals in positions of responsibility in German political life, in the military, foreign service, economic leadership, and government bureaucracies made terrible political and moral misjudgments at the end of the Weimar Republic. He concludes that after 1933 these individuals failed to take the moral and political actions necessary to prevent criminal policies from being implemented or to stop them once they began. Yet the essays raise questions: Was it the case that the regime was as chaotic and uncoordinated as Mommsen suggests? Was there a "cumulative radicalization" or was the Holocaust a case where criminals lay in wait for the right moment to commit a long-premeditated murder? Did long-held ideological visions of extermination come to the fore only after a series of military defeats, or were these plans set in motion in a period of unprecedented military victories? Were the most senior officials really so uninformed about criminal policies taking place in the occupied territories or about the racist character of the war being waged in the East?

Richard Breitman's superb study, *Architect of Genocide: Heinrich Himmler and the Final Solution,* published in 1991, addresses these and related issues with a narrative style and grasp of archival materials that should make this a important work on the subject for years to come. He combines examination of ideological motivation with a detailed grasp of the procedures of government decision-making, thus transcending the functionalist-intentionalist dichotomy. His book is a significant advance in our efforts to understand how the Holocaust was possible.

Breitman notes that the moral argument about improvisation and the Holocaust cuts both ways. As the functionalists argue, an exclusive focus on Hitler may serve to obscure the culpability of others. However, focus on an improvised slaughter is also suspect, as it seems to transform a planned mass murder into murder as a last resort, or "first-degree murder" into "manslaughter." The problem with the exclusively intentionalist approach, which focuses on Hitler's speeches from the 1920s, or later

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speeches in which he prophesied the destruction of the Jews, is that, as the functionalists argued, it leaves out intervening steps, such as Nazi pro-emigration policies during the 1930s, and dismisses Hitler's occasional comments about relocation of the Jews to Madagascar or the Soviet Union. Yet to imply that it was radicals in the bureaucracy seeking to please Hitler who were the driving force not only understates Hitler's role, it also, as Breitman and others have shown, flies in the face of the causation and chronology of the decision-making behind the Holocaust. To drive these points home, Breitman has worked extensively with massive archives of materials, many of them available in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., to present a "detailed study of the men at the top of the Nazi hierarchy during the critical years," that is roughly between 1938 and 1942.

Whether, as the historian Gerald Fleming argued, Heinrich Himmler heard Hitler's wish and made it reality or, as Mommsen argues, he won the competition about jurisdiction over Jewish policy by eventually outbidding and outworking all his rivals, Himmler, the leader of the SS, was clearly and without doubt the central figure in the planning and execution of the Final Solution. Breitman seeks to determine "the flow of events as Himmler experienced them." There was, he contends, no cumulative radicalization or growing loss of reality for Hitler, Himmler, or their top aides. Rather, "the evolution of planning had more to do with the geography, scope, and methods of killing than with any change from a moderate to a radical goal."

Breitman's labor of reconstruction of events as Himmler experienced them is impressive. Meetings, trips, conversations, orders are recounted in remarkable detail, taking the Holocaust out of the realm of metahistory or metaphysics and back into the world of policy and decision-making. *Architect of Genocide* will be a relief for readers of history who yearn for a return to narrative, for theory that is worn gracefully rather than as a sign of intellectual product differentiation, and for the excitement that comes from the hard work of discovery in previously unread documents and sources. Like Mommsen, Breitman understands that Nazi Germany was a government with orders open and secret, with decisions, meetings, bureaucratic conflicts, personality clashes, and jealousies. Unlike Mommsen, however, he discerns amidst the appearance of confusion and chaos the directing and coordinating wills of Hitler and Himmler, and the gradual implication of the "highest senior officials" of Nazi Germany as vision became plan and plans became policy.

Breitman establishes that Himmler was a profoundly convinced racist who believed in the superiority of the Germans and the evil and powerful nature of the Jews, and for whom race was the key factor of political

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analysis. So long as the Jews existed, they would pose a mortal threat to the Germans. Transporting them all to the island of Madagascar, a trial balloon in the Nazi regime in 1939, was never in Himmler's mind an alternative to exterminating them. The proposal had the merit for him and for Hitler of acclimating government officials to the idea of forcefully expelling European Jewry from Europe. But by January 1939 Himmler, with Reinhard Heydrich (who before his assassination in Prague in 1942 was the SS officer next to Himmler most responsible for implementation of the Final Solution), had concluded that emigration no longer provided a solution. In June of that year they presented to Hitler detailed plans for a Germanization of Eastern Europe in which the Jews and millions of Slavs would be expelled or killed to make room for German settlers. The Madagascar plan accustomed officials to the idea that Jews were to be shipped off somewhere, and that the SS and the Reichsicherheitshauptamt (RSHA) were to be in charge. For Himmler, as for Hitler, war against the Soviet Union was a war against a stronghold of the world Jewish conspiracy and the key to planning for an Eastern Europe free of Jews. Breitman writes that by 1940, the idea of exterminating the Jews was "an open secret" among top-level officials of the Nazi regime.

By January 1941, the general idea of extermination of millions in the East produced specific written arrangements between the RSHA, led by Heydrich, and the Wehrmacht, concerning authorities and responsibilities in the forthcoming invasion of the Soviet Union and in the soon-to be-occupied territories. Breitman argues that by March 1941, three months before the invasion of the Soviet Union, Hitler and Himmler had made the fundamental decision to kill Europe's Jews. It was then, in the spring of 1941, that their longstanding disposition to kill Jews coalesced with plans for a continent-wide solution, in view of what they expected to be a rapid victory over the Soviet Union. Hitler and Himmler understood that the war against the Soviet Union would serve as a cover for killing Jews in the East caught behind the lines of the battles between armies, and would soon put all or almost all of Europe's Jews within reach.

Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. The first mass executions of Jews were carried out by the four Einsatzgruppen, SS-troops under Himmler's commands, on June 24th or 25th in the Lithuanian city of Garsden. One leader of Einsatzgruppe A reported that "the goal of the cleansing operation of the Security Police, *in accordance with the fundamental orders,* was the most comprehensive elimination of the Jews possible." Breitman has worked with the daily reports sent back by the four Einsatzgruppen to RSHA headquarters in Berlin, now deposited in the National Archives. Mass murder continued in June and July, when the German armies were winning enormous gains over the Soviets and

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victory seemed only a matter of time. In the early days, the SS elicited support and collaboration from the Wehrmacht's generals with the fallacious claim that the murders were a response to Jewish partisan activity. A significant part of the goal of the murder campaign was accomplished within several weeks of the outset of the Russian war.

Initial success in the Russian campaign enabled Hitler and Himmler to move to the continent-wide final solution, though it was not until August 1941 that the use of poison gas in extermination camps was decided upon as the best method of killing millions. Breitman retraces the evolution of methods – machine guns, trucks with exhausts directed into the back, starvation, explosives, and finally the synthesis of gas chambers and extermination camps. For Himmler, this end result was a product of the German gift for organization from a people not suited, as some SS prisoners said after 1945, to being mass executioners.

Breitman's chronology makes clear that the Final Solution was not a response either to military defeat on the Eastern Front, as Arno Mayer has argued, or a lesson learned from the "Asiatic" barbarism of the Gulag, as Ernst Nolte has claimed. Instead, Breitman makes a compelling case that the fundamental decision to kill the Jews of Europe was made by early 1941, before the invasion of the Soviet Union. The means and methods remained to be determined and came about gradually. Himmler's approval of a continent-wide program took place in August 1941, when German military successes were at their peak, and after he had settled on the idea of gas chambers in extermination camps. By October 1941, several camps were beyond the planning stage. "All of this preceded any serious Nazi anxiety about military defeat, and it was largely uninfluenced by practical considerations about the food supply, shortage of laborers, or constraints on the transportation system, which were not too serious in any case. The Final Solution was the direct expression of Hitler's ideology and frequently expressed wish to destroy the Jewish race."

By the fall of 1941, as plans for a continent-wide solution took shape, Himmler had to inform heads of other agencies of the German government to coordinate the policy, including the foreign office, the military, and officials in charge of the occupied territories. Breitman interprets the Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942 not as a decision-making meeting but as a meeting intended to give the official stamp to a prior policy decision. Wannsee facilitated coordination among the relevant government agencies. In May 1942, Hitler issued a decree giving Himmler power to issue directives on security and resettlement in Poland, where the death camps were. Himmler was now in a position to oversee implementation of the plan he himself had approved in late summer 1941. The need for secrecy and deception was stressed throughout, evident in the absence of written orders by Hitler to Himmler and in the widespread

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use of euphemism among officials to refer to the policy.

On one occasion, in October 1943 in Posen, Poland, Himmler broke with euphemism in a speech delivered to SS officers. Breitman found that Himmler tape-recorded his own speech, and that the tape now resides in the National Archives. One can hear him speaking clearly about "the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people." Breitman reports that Himmler spoke "for the most part dispassionately," even when talking specifically about mass murder or about "the moral right" and "duty . . . to kill this race that wanted to kill us." Breitman reports that Himmler's voice rose to an angry snarl as he said that "we do not have the right to enrich ourselves even just with a fur or a watch or Mark or with a cigarette!" This, writes Breitman, "was the most strident and most emotional moment in the whole speech. The architect of mass murder remained in his own eyes a moralist to the end." Breitman concludes: "The idea of killing Jews was on the SS agenda from at least 1938 on." But the scope of the killing depended upon German's military and diplomatic sitiuation:

> By March 1941, the Final Solution was just a matter of time – and timing. This date is months earlier than the juncture most specialists have selected, but the evidence is compelling. Hitler had rejected other, lesser plans (Madagascar, sterilization). He had already approved a liquidation plan for Jews in the Reich and Bohemia-Moravia (at the minimum). Heydrich had already started negotiation with the army regarding the Einsatzgruppen in the Soviet Union, and the RSHA had sent Jewish specialists to other European countries to prepare for deportations. Emigration of Polish Jews had been banned months earlier, and closed ghettos and work camps had created the preconditions for easy disposal of Jews in Poland. Eichmann spoke of "final evacuation" of Jews to Poland at a time when Hitler was promising to remove all Jews from Poland. . . . So the argument does not rest on Hitler's rhetoric alone. None of these sources spells out everything; none of them is a perfect contemporary blueprint. But they are all independent sources and, taken together, they form a coherent picture of far-reaching plans and fundamental decisions made during the preparations for the campaign against the U.S.S.R."

The early victories in the Soviet Union gave Hitler and Himmler the impression that they had little to fear, so they went beyond the killings in the Soviet Union to implement the continent-wide deportations of Jews. Breitman notes, "The sequence of planning and, in some cases, the partial implementation of those plans rule out explanations based on a 'late' decision for the Final Solution. No wartime constraints forced the Nazi elite

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to abandon less extreme solutions to the Jewish 'problem'." The fact that Hitler and Himmler were the key decision-makers behind the Final Solution does not exculpate the German military, corporations, transport officials, doctors, lawyers, and other government bureaucracies involved, or the population which was variously indifferent and hostile. "To limit responsibility to the men at the top alone is to provide a convenient excuse for all the others involved. But to emphasize the role of bureaucrats and the men in the field resolving practical problems and to overlook the ideological fanaticism and substantial direction from the top is to ignore historical reality – and to risk drawing the wrong lessons from the past."

Breitman has brought politics and government back into our understanding of the Holocaust and removed it from the realm of metahistory and myth. His answer to the question "How was Auschwitz possible?" is essentially that evil men with evil beliefs used their vast power to implement policies based on these convictions. That they had, as the Germans say, many "helpers" does not detract from their central causal role. They were capable of intricate organizational planning, cool deception, and strategic sense. Their evil did not preclude worldly effectiveness. In the matter of decision-making and the Holocaust, Breitman constructs a more compelling case than Mommsen. By fall 1941 or at the latest January 1942, senior officials of the German government who needed to know were aware that a decision to create a continent-wide campaign to murder the Jews of Europe, in line with Hitler's wishes, had been made. This was not, as Mommsen wrote, a case of "cumulative radicalization." Rather, it was the implementation of long-held and often-articulated racial hatreds. There was no moment before spring 1941 when mass murder could have been initiated. As soon as the Jews who had previously lived in Eastern Europe were killed, and there was room for new victims in ghettos and death camps, Jews from Germany and Western Europe were shipped to Eastern Europe to be killed.

Breitman's book reminds us also that ideally the historian pursues a noble calling, that of seeking to get as close to the truth as the evidence and an open and curious mind will permit. Although the deconstructionist attack on the possibility of coherent narrative or approximation of the truth has peaked, many historians may remain doubtful about the possibility of distinguishing between fact and fiction. Of course *The Architect of Genocide* is an assemblage of thousands of documents into a narrative. Yet it is a construct that may revive the weary, inspire the young, and remind us all what can be accomplished with some moral clarity, a probing intellect, and the enormous diligence evident in this important work. Breitman reminds us that the history of ideas and beliefs belongs together with the history of politics and policy. There will be no final answer to

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the riddle of the Final Solution. However, both Breitman and Mommsen, in their different ways, show that decent people can pursue alternative hypotheses yet add greatly to our understanding of how Auschwitz was possible.

Jeffrey Herf

Ford Redux

FORD MADOX FORD. By Alan Judd. Harvard University Press. $29.95.

For a writer who distrusted biographies, Ford Madox Ford has had his share of them. His life has been written about by those who worked for him (Douglas Goldring, his sub-editor at *The English Review*), by women who loved him (Violet Hunt and Stella Bowen), by writers who knew him (H. G. Wells, Jean Rhys and Hemingway, among others), and by varieties of critics and professors (Frank McShane, Thomas Moser and Arthur Mizener, to name a few). By this time all the facts seem to be in, all the relationships understood, all the warts exposed. Why, then, another full-scale biography?

The answer has nothing to do with any need to provide fresh information about Ford. Alan Judd, himself a novelist, did not see his task as one of seeking out sources hitherto undiscovered, or of attempting a strikingly different assessment of Ford's work. Judd's study offers little that we might think of as "new" about Ford. Rather, it is a protracted effort at empathetic understanding, suffused with what can only be described as love, of a lonely, battered soul about whom Wells wrote, "What he is really or if he is really, nobody knows now and he least of all." Ford clearly seized Judd's imagination in the way that a novelist might be possessed by a character he has created, and through Judd's loving pursuit of his subject we feel that he is struggling to make sense not only of Ford's life and commitment to art, but of his own as well. It is this connection between author and subject which gives the book its distinctive voice and its particular power.

In his treatment of Ford, Judd sounds at times distressingly like a defense attorney, determined to convince the jury that his client is innocent of some of the unpleasant implications about his character which Judd thinks emerge from Mizener's 1971 study. Certainly it is true that the chaos of Ford's emotional life requires some getting used to, if not neces-

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sarily the disapprobation which Judd senses in Mizener. He was married at the age of twenty to seventeen-year-old Elsie Martindale. (He warned her not to expect him to be faithful, and indeed, had an affair with her sister.) Ford moved implacably through a number of relationships. Janice Biala, in whose arms Ford died in Paris in 1939, estimated there were eighteen women in his life, "including one of considerable importance of whom nothing is known except her first name, which was Elizabeth," but the significant ones were Violet Hunt, Brigit Patmore, Stella Bowen, Jean Rhys, and Janice Biala.

Although Ford was not in any conventional way physically attractive – he was described by Robert Lowell as looking like "a British version of the Republican elephant," and by Wyndham Lewis, less kindly, as a "flabby lemon and pink giant who hung his mouth open as if he were an animal at the zoo inviting buns" – women were always falling in love with him. They found him enormously interesting and, despite his visibility as a literary presence, both vulnerable and dependent – a combination that proved difficult to resist. Although he was never able to obtain a divorce from Elsie, he tended to think of his subsequent women as his wives, a practice which had a bizarre denouement when Elsie successfully sued a small magazine, *The Throne,* for referring to Violet as Mrs. Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford's original name, which he had changed because of anti-German sentiment after World War I).

Judd is concerned that we not censure Ford for his meanderings, arguing, for example, that Ford could not legitimately be considered a philanderer because he genuinely *liked* women. He is even more strenuously defensive regarding Ford's well-known tendency to wander rather far from the truth, both in his dealings with others and in recounting incidents from his own past. Again and again Judd explains that Ford's evasions, distortions and downright fabrications were products of his transforming artistic imagination, or his life-giving disdain for facts, or his splendid ability to render the truth of a person or an event without having to bother with niggling matters of fact. Judd's endless insistence that we not hold Ford responsible for his statements is distracting and finally silly. On balance it would seem preferable that writers, like plumbers, toll collectors and opthalmologists, tell the truth rather than lie about things, and while it is not necessary to condemn them if they don't, neither is it reasonable to suggest repeatedly that it doesn't make any difference.

But if unwavering fidelity to the truth was a problem for Ford, he had no difficulty honoring his muse. As Judd emphasizes, work was for Ford "the condition of life. It is not possible to imagine him without work; what he did he was." Publishing his first book when he was seventeen, he wrote virtually every day for the rest of his life. He wrote in cottages, in

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hotels, while traveling; he wrote on boxes, trays, desks. However complicated his emotional life, however difficult the physical conditions around him, he never stopped writing. His commitment to literature was absolute. He described his monumental *The March of Literature,* a survey covering all literature from Confucius to 1938 – including work in the classical languages, French, German and Italian, which he read in the original – as "the book of an old man mad about writing." To his friend Joseph Conrad he attributed the origins of his faith that "the writing of novels is the only pursuit worthwhile for a proper man" – and it is a virtue of Judd's study that he makes us feel the heroic nature of that pursuit.

While the results of his efforts were prodigious, Ford nevertheless remains one of the least-recognized writers of the twentieth century. Author of eighty-one books (including three novels on which he collaborated with Conrad) and over four hundred articles, he is known most widely for one novel, *The Good Soldier* (1915), memorably narrated by an obtuse American who seems not to comprehend the moral squalor of the situation in which he is immersed. Connoisseurs of modern fiction might also be familiar with Christopher Tietjens of the *Parade's End* trilogy, whose honor and principles make him increasingly irrelevant in the decomposing British society after the First World War. And some with arcane interests might have encountered *The Fifth Queen,* Ford's trio of novels about Henry VIII's Katherine Howard. But there it largely ends. If it weren't for modern novel courses which dwell with fascination on the ironies and narrative technique of *The Good Soldier* (quite possibly the only book to have been kept alive by the obsessive interest of American professors of literature), it is not clear that Ford would be read at all today.

So it is salutary to have Judd's sympathetic account of a major literary figure who always managed to avoid not just fame but even the capacity to support himself adequately. Chronically out of money because his books never sold well, he was forced to write more and more of them in order to generate whatever income he could from advances and paltry sales. (*The Good Soldier,* for example, Ford's most successful novel, earned him £67 the year it came out – and cost his publisher, John Lane, £54.) Perhaps with less pressure to publish he might have produced more that was first-rate, but he simply didn't have such leisure. Indeed, the only respite from financial worry – and the need to publish – came during his service in World War I. Not coincidentally, and despite the fact of having been mildly gassed and slightly concussed, Ford thoroughly enjoyed his time at the front.

Best-known (if one can use that phrase) as a novelist, he was also a serious poet, although – typically enough – his collected poems weren't

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published for a long time in Britain and remain difficult to find today. Ford was an early advocate of the simple, colloquial diction we take for granted in modern poetry. His own poetry is uneven. He was never quite able to free himself from some of the nineteenth-century poetic conventions which as a critic and theorist he rejected, though the substantial amounts of it that Judd includes make clear that Ford also possessed a legitimate poetic talent.

Pound thought Ford one of the period's most important critics in helping to restore a living language to English verse. He recounts how Ford protested against the stilted nature of some of Pound's work by rolling around on the floor and groaning loudly. That roll, Pound estimated, saved him at least two years' effort. It is again ironically appropriate that the famous exhortation frequently ascribed to Pound by Robert Lowell, among others, that "poetry should be at least as well-written as prose," was actually uttered to Pound by Ford.

Ford's belief in the importance of words was demonstrated not just by the millions of them he generated himself, but by the two short-lived literary reviews he edited brilliantly: *The English Review* in 1908 and *The Transatlantic Review* in 1924. Neither was able to survive Ford's managerial incompetence for even a year – Douglas Goldring of *The English Review* described him as "more childishly incapable than any man I have ever met" – but both were made luminous by Ford's special gift for discovering new writers and convincing already proven ones to publish with him. This is particularly true of *The English Review,* which during its brief existence became arguably one of the most distinguished literary journals of the century. Its first issue, for instance, included contributions from Henry James, Conrad, Wells, Hardy, and Galsworthy, and a translation of a Tolstoy story. Ford was also quick to recognize the talent of Wyndham Lewis, Pound, and D. H. Lawrence, all of whom he published when they were still relatively unknown. Good writing spoke to him immediately whenever he encountered it. He had only to read the first paragraph of Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums" before placing it in his pile of accepted manuscripts.

Before it fell victim to its inevitable financial difficulties, *The Transatlantic Review,* edited from Paris, published Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, e. e. cummings and William Carlos Williams. Perhaps Ford's greatest editorial achievement here was in landing an excerpt from *Finnegan's Wake,* to which he gave the title "Work in Progress." Joyce was sufficiently delighted with Ford's support of his work that he actually consented, uncharacteristically, to become godfather to Ford's daughter, Julie. With all of his personal failings and ineptitudes, Ford remained staunchly devoted to the cause of literature. He was never mean-spirited,

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never letting his frustrations with his own career interfere with his encouragement of young writers. His faults, as Pound wrote, "like his moustache, [were] out in front where everyone cd/ see Yum." In reacquainting us with this generous, large-souled man, Judd deserves our thanks. While Ford was skeptical of biographies generally, he allowed that they might be valuable when "the time comes . . . for some creative artist to have a try at re-breathing life into [a writer's] dead bones." Ford would be pleased with the loving care Alan Judd has taken to resuscitate his frequently neglected old bones.

Michael Rosenthal

Wild Plots

TRIMMINGS. By Harryette Mullen. Tender Buttons, Segue. $7.00.

CLAMOR. By Ann Lauterbach. Viking Penguin. $17.95.

THE WILD IRIS. By Louise Glück. The Ecco Press. $19.95.

Harryette Mullen's *Trimmings,* her second volume of poems, so far nearly invisible on the literary horizon, is an ebulliently feminist, black and bluesy, bebop, wicked, scatty, addictive sequence of mazy prose poems, ostensibly about wardrobe accessories and the ramifications thereof, and in fact about language and semiotics in general. The poems rely heavily on wordplay and paradox and make us think harder about gender and racial issues. Compact, sometimes no more than eight or ten words, they are as loaded as chocolate truffles and the finest Vegas dice. Several of them allude to Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons,* without which *Trimmings* would not have been possible. Mullen's title acknowledges the debt, since it means both "sartorial decorations" (to comport with Stein's *Buttons*) and "garnishings" (to supplement Stein's "Food" in the third part of that work). Not that Mullen sounds very Steinian, even when she is paying homage:

> Girt, a good old girl got hipped. They thrive with wives, broad beams. Most worthy girth, providing firm. Foundations in midriff. Across (between) girdled loins, tender girders. Gartered, perhaps, struts. Stretching, a snap crotch.

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A tribute to Gert, a "most worthy," hip, and hippy writer, who "got hipped" instead of hitched, who underwrites Mullen's enterprise and with whom Mullen hereby joins in partnership to make a "firm," this poem goes off forthwith in its own directions – under the influence or the gaze, as it were, of certain other construction workers, who build their architectural structures of "broad beams," "girders" and "struts," and meanwhile hope for smiles from a passing broad, whose loins however are girt or girded, and who has built her own redoubt of garters, girdles, and other foundations, a body suit, and a saucy walk that is at once seductive, defensive, and jazzy (her own structures "firm. Foundations" being established and shaken at once as they are mid-*riff*). As one of the earlier poems puts it, "Dress shields, armed guard at breastwork, a hard mail covering . . . . Whose armor is brassier." One probably doesn't need to recall that the euphemistic origin of "brassiere" is "arm guard" or need to have seen the bustier that Jean-Paul Gaultier designed for Madonna to recognize the brassiness – the boldness *and* the armor-like quality – of the brassiere sported by this poem. If soldiers can "Dress arms," women can "Dress shields," even as their dress protects but arms them.

One of Mullen's points is that in our culture feminine dress is often a version of nakedness – a means not only of covering but also of revealing. One could design a seminar around this volume, *Tender Buttons,* Ann Hollander's scintillating *Seeing Through Clothes,* which argues in part that in any given era the *haute couture* informs our idea of the ideal female body as much as our sense of that body dictates the lines of fashionable clothing, and Vera Lehndorff's *"Veruschka": Trans-Figurations* (done in collaboration with painter and photographer Holger Trülsch) in which the eponymous figure, famous as a model in the 1960s, appears in body paint only. The recent cover of *Vanity Fair* that showed Demi Moore in a body-painted man's suit is precisely a superficial rip-off of Lehndorff's profound work. It is exactly the sort of rip-off that Mullen's book is *not* (of Stein) and that Mullen might very well contemn. As coy as Mullen's book is, it is also a scathing attack on the sexist culture, epitomized by *Vanity Fair,* that is its matrix. Here is a poem, the likes of which we are not likely to find next week in *The New Yorker,* in which the wealthy capitalist woman's clothing is equated with the power of her nakedness, which is to say exposed as a species of merkin:

> Animal pelts, little minks, skins, tail. Fur flies. Pet smitten,
> smooth beaver strokes. Muff, soft, 'like rabbits.' Fine fox
> stole, furtive hiding. Down the road a pretty fur piece.

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At bottom – though after pondering this book, one cannot take any such phrase for granted – Mullen is fascinated by what she calls in her postscript (entitled "Off the Top") "language as clothing and clothing as language." Its many other coups – its invocations of Josephine Baker and Manet's "Olympia," its Joycean *trouvailles* and *jouissances* – I have to leave to the reader.

Mullen's use of clothing allows me to note the beautiful jacket on Ann Lauterbach's third volume, *Clamor*. It represents a fragment of a fresco by Giotto, the whole of which – or so the credit informs us – is known as *Vision of the Ascension of St. Francis*. Not one to wrangle over such matters with a poet who has been a painter and a director of art galleries here and abroad, I must still record that a friend has shown me that in fact the jacket reproduces a painting in Florence's Santa Croce, usually called *St. Francis Appeals to Bishop Guido and Vision of a Dying Friar*. Is this difference inadvertent? (The fresco of St. Francis's ascension, in San Francesco at Assisi, has a similar structure.) Or meaningful? Because much of the cover's allure is the absence at its center, where the figure that would be St. Francis has itself been lost, it is possible that the mistitling is meant to identify that loss with the ascension of the Saint, or vision with vanishment. In any case, the image is an appropriate emblem for *Clamor* because these poems are riddled and raddled (doubly riddled, doubly raddled) with "elaborate absences." They are shot through as samite with threads of the proverbial golden silence. They are thunderous with sunderings, with omissions, distortions, vacancies. "There are holes in the fabric," as one poem puts it. And there are unobstrusive wholes too.

One corollary to the elisions and lacunae in *Clamor* is continual surprise. "In [this] parade's deft narration," to borrow again, "Anyone could join the party" – and "What comes up comes up." At any moment in this Postmodern surround "Someone moans through thin walls/ Between the sonata and the football game." The idiom is dependably strange, or vivid, or rebarbative; and one poem could be describing itself when it notes that "The wild words obey their primary intelligence,/ Forget their settings, forget their images,/ Come riding across the road like hard things/ Without hindrance, making a subtle new noise,/ Making an angle." Lauterbach has read John Ashbery closely, and Ashbery's and Mullen's great example, Stein. Like Michael Palmer, or rather unlike him because utterly in her own way, she has studied the Language poets yet never sounds imitative. Relentlessly errant, intensely thought, uncannily reflexive, coruscant with wordplay (as she overlaps terms like "partition" and "parturition," "rupture" and "rapture"), and compositionally innovative, her maximalist poems are "Lavish, syntactic, new in the natural key/ But frugal and obscure in translation." They are "unstuck, estranged and

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original." One section of one poem ends each strophe on the words "shed, and." "Prom in Toledo Night" creates an esoteric, intricately recursive form, which invites the reader either continually to hold one sentence in suspension while working through another or to photocopy the poem, cut it up into lines, and reorder it into its "original" narratives – only to return reeling to the poem as it is on the page, with its intercalated segments of thought. These poems are rich and eldritch at once.

Throughout *Clamor* there is a "girl," who, like Stevens's "hermit in a poet's metaphors" in *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction,* "comes and goes and comes and goes all day," a "girl materializing like a path along the ridge," then vanishing, like St. Francis ascending, then reappearing at the next turn. She is bewitching; she is the poet and is not – or the muse, the poet who knows that the "similar" always "Harbors difference in its midst," and whose poems blaze a trail into a whole new climate, wherein we come to expect, amid tinted fogs and shafts of light, emulsions and apparitions, shards of references in rainy abstractions, "a naturalism of the obscure."

Louise Glück's *The Wild Iris* characteristically contains no poem longer than thirty lines, and many of the poems gleam with the knifing ironies and the burnished paradoxes that have always marked her work, while some show a new visionary fire; but there is a strong sense in which this, her sixth volume, is really a single, rhizomic sequence, a complex structure that we can now see has been evolving at least since her third volume, *Descending Figure,* and which is embodied, in a less integrated form, in her fifth, *Ararat.* Glück wrote these fifty-four poems in ten weeks, a period that lends the book an organizational element: the poems in its first half are set mostly in the spring, while those in its second half occur in deepening summer. At the same time, Glück moves from morning to evening, since the lyrics in the poet's voice in the first half are mostly called "Matins," while the corresponding poems in the last half are "Vespers." Taken together, these poems from the poet's point of view constitute one of three kinds of poem in *Wild Iris.* Poems of a second kind see things from the vantage of nature – or, to be more specific, flowers and other vegetation in the family garden. The remaining poems, whose titles usually designate a time of day, a season, or a weather condition, are in the voice of God – here a "father," a "master," a figure of "authority," and primarily Judaic, regardless of the crepuscular Catholic coloring of "Matins" and "Vetpers." The presence of this third point of view puts Glück's compelling sequence in a venerable and recently quite vigorous but ever startling genre that reaches in English from George Herbert through Blake and Yeats to John Berryman and Ted Hughes and James Merrill.

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The jacket copy's exigent prose tells us that the volume creates "an impassioned polyphonic exchange among the god 'who disclose[s]/ virtually nothing,' human beings who 'leave/ signs of feeling/ everywhere,' and a garden where 'whatever/ returns from oblivion returns/ to find a voice.' " In fact, things are both more and less complicated than that. For instance, it is precisely "polyphonic exchange" that never occurs. The different speakers usually don't hear and never truly understand or respond directly to one another, and they rarely (if significantly) speak in unison – and their different isolations give the sequence much of its reverberating pathos. As God puts it in "Sunset," when addressing the poet: "My great happiness/ is the sound your voice makes/ calling to me even in despair; my sorrow/ that I cannot answer you/ in speech you accept as mine."

As that passage will suggest, Glück's strategy entails certain nagging epistemological difficulties. For one, God speaks to the poet in words that she cannot understand but can somehow transcribe in the language that she writes and that we read. Or can we elude that paradox by drawing a hard distinction between the "poet" and the human "speaker" of the "Matins" and "Vespers" – in which case, the invisible "poet" knows the language of God but her "speaker" does not? If so, as the dust jacket puts it mighty casually, we have here a "ventriloquism," whereby the poet throws her voice into God and garden as well as into her own stand-in. Or perhaps we are to infer God as the source of all voices and the rest of the speakers as dummies. But the speaker in one of the "Matins," for *her* part, finds the proposition that God "must be all things" entirely "useless." Maybe we should not posit a source at all; maybe we can know only that we are enmeshed in a network of desiring voices deaf to one another. The possibilities are intriguing – the more so because each of the points of view is contradictory. Thus while God claims transcendent attributes, he is ordinarily all too human (petty, pitying, vindictive, impotent). Similarly, the voices from the garden are sometimes imperious and unfeeling ("The Hawthorn Tree" and "Lanium"), sometimes wonderfully passionate ("Trillium" and "The Jacob's Ladder").

My best guess is that we are dealing with conflicting projections of a single, solipsistic, human sensibility, to which each moment has its own flaring, lyrical life and transitory, dramatic truth. Something like this motivates Berryman's "Homage to Mistress Bradstreet" and Merrill's "From the Cupola" (*The Changing Light at Sandover,* by contrast, resembles *Paradise Lost* in that God is a character in an epic pageant, rather than another importunate lyric presence), but in each of these other poems the conflict is sharply defined and part of the crucial issue from the outset. It is not clear to me that such a psychomachia is sustained in *The Wild Iris* –

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though I must say that Glück's marvelous final poem brings the different voices together in a fashion reminiscent of the closes of those earlier twentieth-century masterpieces and that it works best for me when I imagine that it springs from and momentarily resolves such a drama. Here is the last stanza:

> Hush, beloved. It doesn't matter to me
> how many summers I live to return:
> this one summer we have entered eternity.
> I felt your two hands
> bury me to release its splendor.

"We," exactly. The title "The White Lilies" suggests that this voice is that of the flowers, speaking to the poet/gardener; but the lilies symbolize resurrection and thus blur into the incarnate god, who could be speaking to the poet; while the elated poet herself might deservedly feel that this part of her has been planted like a bulb in the autumn by a gardener/god. In any event, *The Wild Iris* is a perennial.

Stephen Yenser

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